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WIZARDS OF THE COAST™

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® CAMPAIGN ACCESSORY

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

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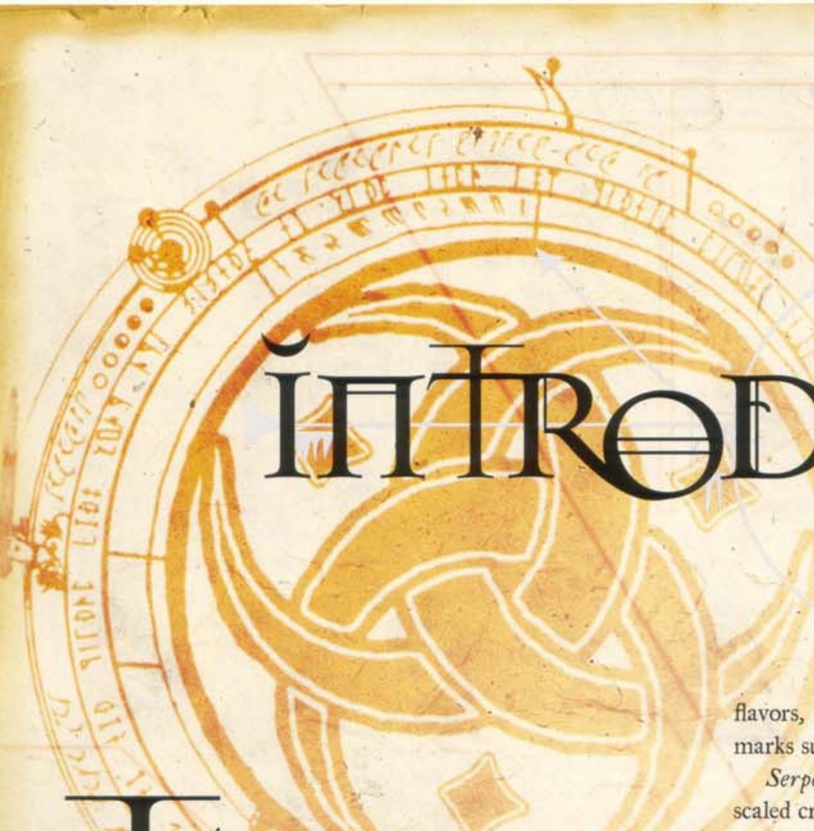


introduction

Throughout recorded history, the humans of Faerûn have feared the Scaled Ones—those sentient snake and lizard races whose cultures, magic, weapons, cities, and visible accomplishments rival those of humanoids. Fireside terror tales tell of slithering death, unblinking eyes, and fangs in the night, and a few even hint at the serpentfolks' fell plans to enslave all other races and breed them like cattle. Some people scoff at such "darkshadow talk," but the wisest sages warn that these fears have a solid foundation. Some few even claim that it's too late to be afraid because undercover enslavement already exists in many of Faerûn's proudest cities.

Merchants in Waterdeep and the Silver Marches readily trade rumors of nagas and snake-headed humans who rule southern cities, and of jungles "down there" aswarm with many-headed snakes as long as barges. But in Calimshan, the Vilhon Reach, and more southerly lands, talk of the Scaled Ones is far more guarded. All across Faerûn, those who live closer to the fabled reptilian cultures tend to be far more reticent to speak of them aloud than those who live farther away.

Although farmers and stay-at-home crafters in most of Faerûn's human-dominated realms know nothing of the Scaled Ones beyond the tales told in taverns, many far-traveled folk are convinced that malevolent serpent beings are at work behind the scenes—they're just not quite sure where or how. Even traders who frequent the southerly lands are loath to speak directly of such creatures lest they draw undue attention to themselves. Though merchants are quick to warn inexperienced servants and traveling companions about odd-smelling smoke (especially if it has a green or purple hue), strange piping sounds arising from cellars and sewers, and wines or sweets tainted with exotic flavors, they usually reply to direct questions with cryptic remarks such as, "Crawling evils never sleep."

Serpent Kingdoms focuses primarily on the mysterious, scaled creator race known as the sarrukh—and the three major races its members bred and modified into their present forms from more primitive ancestors: lizardfolk, nagas, and yuan-ti. Various other monsters and races native to Toril, including the asabi, ophidians, pterafolk, tren, and troglodytes, are also examined in some detail.

abbreviations

To facilitate the use of the many Forgotten Realms and D&D books, *Serpent Kingdoms* references the races, feats, and other design elements introduced in those books. Each reference is indicated by an abbreviation.

FF—*Fiend Folio*
For—*FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*
Mon—*Monsters of Faerûn*
MM—*Monster Manual*
MM2—*Monster Manual II*
PG—*Player's Guide to Faerûn*
Rac—*Races of Faerûn*
Sav—*Savage Species*
SK—*Serpent Kingdoms*
Und—*Underdark*
Una—*Unapproachable East*

what you need to play

To use this sourcebook, you need the DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® *Player's Handbook*, *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and *Monster Manual*, plus *Monster Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn*, and the *FORGOTTEN REALMS® Campaign Setting*. Many references are also made in these pages to *Races of Faerûn*, *Player's Guide to Faerûn*, *Magic of Faerûn*, *Monster Manual II*, *Expanded Psionics Handbook*, *Book of Vile Darkness*, *Savage Species*, and *Fiend Folio*.

The Progenitors

Toril has been home to reptilian creatures of both the serpent (legless) and the lizard (limbed) kinds ever since the mists lifted from the newly formed continents. Sages believe that before the coming of dragons, much of Faerûn's dry land was dominated by creatures that some humans called Thunderers—lizards ranging from a few inches in length to the size of the biggest oceangoing ships that humankind has since constructed. Amid this flourishing profusion of reptiles were certain kinds of sentient lizards and snakes that developed societies, mastered magic, and eventually built empires.

In this ancient time, the lizard people known as the sarrukh rose to become the dominant race of Faerûn. Through their superior intellect and tactical sense, they forged the land empires known as Isstosseffifil, Mhairshaulk, and Okoth—vast realms wherein they enslaved, bred, and experimented upon other creatures. The sarrukh dwelt in fortresses, kept thousands of slaves, and built a culture the like of which has never been seen since. Eventually, however, the empires of the sarrukh met the inevitable fate of all empires—they slipped into decadence and were ultimately swept away by foes from within and without.

Today, some thirty-six thousand years later, the sarrukh are very rare but not quite extinct. The few that are left remain as aloof from the rest of Toril as their ancestors were at the height of their power. In fact, most beings in modern-day Faerûn have never even heard of them.

Scaled Ones and Scaleless Ones

Serpent Kingdoms uses several terms to denote various kinds of scaled and nonscaled creatures. For the purpose of this book, these terms are as defined below. Dragons, though they are powerful reptiles, are not considered Scaled Ones.

Scaleless Ones

The term "Scaleless Ones" includes all humanoids and monstrous humanoids that do not fall into the Scaled Ones category.

Scaled Ones

This encompasses all creatures in the following subcategories.

SCALYKIND

The term scalykind includes all creatures with the reptilian subtype, as well as the following creatures from the books published for the D&D game.

Asabi[Mon], braxat[MM2], dragonkin[Mon], firenewt[Mon], frost salamander[MM2], khaasta[FF], kobold[MM], lizard king/queen[SK], lizardfolk[MM], pterafolk[Mon], sarkrith[FF], stingtail[Mon], tren[SK], troglodyte[MM].

Rangers in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* may select scalykind instead of a creature type or organization as a favored enemy.

LIZARDS

The term lizards includes all of the following creatures from the books published for the D&D game. The category includes all dinosaurs and hydras.

Allosaurus[MM2], ankylosaurus[MM2], basilisk[MM], ceratosaur[SK], crocodile[MM], cryptoclidus[MM2], deinonychus[MM], elasmosaurus[MM], giant crocodile[MM], giant lizard[MM], hydra[MM], lizard[MM], megaraptor[MM], nifern[SK], pack lizard[For], pteradon[SK], quetzalcoatlus[MM2], riding lizard[For], seismosaurus[MM2], shocker lizard[MM], spinosaurus[MM2], spitting crawler[For], triceratops[MM], tyrannosaurus[MM], yrthak[MM].

SERPENT CONSTRUCTS

The term serpent constructs includes all of the following creatures from the books published for the D&D game.

Bronze serpent[MM2], iron cobra[FF], necrophidius[FF], serpentflesh golem[SK].

SERPENTS

The term serpents includes all of the following creatures from the books published for the D&D game.

Amphisbaena[SK], constrictor snake[MM], deathcoils[SK], deathfang[Rac], dire snake[MM2], dung snake[SK], flame snake[FF], flying snake[Rac], giant constrictor snake[MM], glacier snake[SK], Ice serpent[Mon], jaculi[SK], legendary snake[MM2], mlarraun[SK], reed snake[SK], sewerm[SK], shadow asp[FF], tree python[SK], two-headed adder[For], viper[MM], whipsnake[SK], winged viper[For].

SERPENTFOLK

In addition to creatures with the Snake Blood feat (see Feats in *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*) or a yuan-ti graft, the term serpentfolk includes all of the following creatures from the books published for the D&D game.

average salamander[MM], banelar naga[SK], banelar[Mon], bone naga template[SK], bone naga[MM2], couatl[MM], dark naga[MM], Faerûnian ha-naga[SK], flamebrother salamander[MM], guardian naga[MM], iridescent naga[SK], marilith[MM], nagahydra[SK], noble salamander[MM], ophidian[FF], sarrukh[SK], spirit naga[MM], ti-khana template[FF], wereserpent[SK], yuan-ti abomination[MM], yuan-ti anathema[FF], yuan-ti broodguard template[Mon], yuan-ti broodguard template[Sav], yuan-ti halfblood[MM], yuan-ti holy guardian[SK], yuan-ti mageslayer[SK], yuan-ti pureblood[MM], yuan-ti tainted one template[Mon], yuan-ti tainted one template[Sav].

Rangers in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting* may select serpentfolk instead of a creature type or organization as a favored enemy.

The creations of the sarrukh, however, still flourish in many parts of Faerûn. The most notable of these are the yuan-ti, the nagas, and the lizardfolk, but horrific (and thankfully rarer) reptilian monsters with strange shapes and deadly powers have been sighted by intrepid adventurers across the continent. Many of the nagas and yuan-ti experiment on themselves and other creatures just as the sarrukh did on them, in hopes of granting themselves and their servitors even greater powers.

The ever-expanding humanoid influence on Faerûn has done little to check the spread of the Scaled Ones, and even those that lack the means and desire for self-improvement persist (and sometimes flourish) in remote areas. The Thunderers and other ancient, primitive kinds of Scaled Ones were hunted nearly to extinction by dragons, but a few such creatures still survive in remote jungle areas and on offshore islands.

Though vast empires controlled by Scaled Ones no longer exist on the surface of Faerûn, sentient serpentfolk and scalykind are not the rare perils that humans would like to believe they are, nor are they confined to tombs and ruins. Through spies and direct influence, the covert reach of the Scaled Ones extends to surprising places—including the glittering hearts of Faerûn's wealthiest, busiest cities.

The Insidious Threat

Neither the sarrukh nor their most capable creations are stupid. Though they view humanoids as weak, stinking, ugly, edible cattle, they also recognize that the Scaleless Ones are swift and intelligent, breed rapidly, and can rise to nearly any challenge. Indeed, humans in particular are perhaps the most adaptable of all the races of Faerûn, making them dangerous but valuable slave material.

Thus, though most yuan-ti and nagas in Faerûn today view humans and their kin as potential food and slaves, they realize that these creatures also constitute their most dangerous foes. Energetic and widespread, humanoids are too numerous to be confronted openly, but too useful and powerful to be allowed to flourish freely. Indeed, the races spawned by the sarrukh are always seeking to expand their influence among humanoids, usually in subtle ways.

The Ideal

In a perfect serpentfolk-controlled community, humanoids would eagerly serve as slaves, watching for perils that could endanger their serpentine masters and acting swiftly on their own initiative to deal with such threats and warn their masters of danger. Furthermore, the controlled humanoids would willingly offer themselves as sacrifices to the snake-god Sseth and live only to give pleasure and contentment to their masters. In practice, however, Scaled Ones know quite well that no such "perfect" community can exist because by their very nature slaves are weak and imperfect creatures.

Covert Control

The drive to dominate is characteristic of the Scaled Ones' cultures, and this need, more than any other facet of their society, makes them an insidious threat to humanoids. To the yuan-ti, direct or indirect control of other beings is the Sacred Way of Sseth—the only proper way to deal with other races; whereas to nagas, it is both prudent and the most favored style of behavior. The yuan-ti developed a special terminology to indicate the exact status of Scaleless Ones with whom they have contact. The tsaa olo are potential slaves (usually human, though this term can be applied to any Scaleless One—and sometimes even to other Scaled Ones, as a term of contempt). The hasssar are creatures currently being influenced or conquered, and the sslin are controlled servitors or slaves.

The Scaled Ones' attempts to gain control over a humanoid culture include a high degree of covert activity. Both nagas and yuan-ti dwell among humans, subtly influencing and enslaving them through magic, drugs, and controlled servitor creatures, including the altered humans known as tainted ones. Rulers and other powerful individuals, such as mighty wizards, are usually the first targets in a given culture, since control of such persons makes domination of the rest of the community simpler.

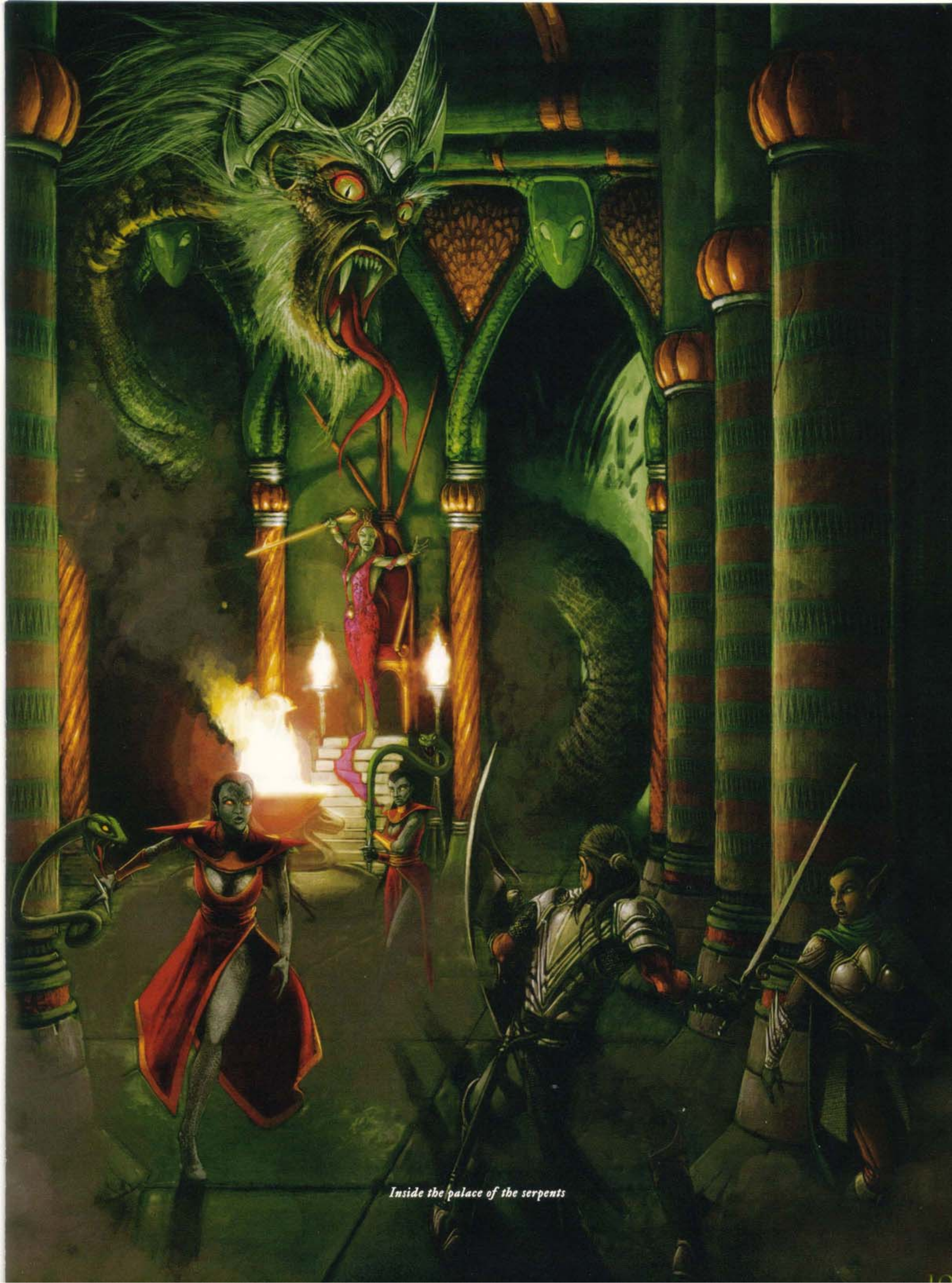
Most of the time, these techniques are used so subtly as to be unnoticeable. Indeed, a tired or uninquisitive humanoid visiting a settlement controlled by serpent creatures may not notice anything out of the ordinary at all. More alert travelers might experience a feeling of being watched or notice an odd local custom—seemingly practiced by everyone—of perfuming the body with strongly scented oils.

Merchants who become aware of serpent influence either avoid the affected places altogether or try to trade with the local citizens for whatever drugs, herbs, and venoms they can obtain. The serpent creatures controlling the servitor humans may offer the desired goods eagerly in order to take control of the merchants or expand their influence to areas beyond their direct control.

Neither yuan-ti nor nagas are foolish enough to show their true forms openly in any human settlement they don't control. Thus, when dwelling in or visiting humanoid-dominated settlements, most sentient serpent creatures remain hidden—either behind walls in countryside compounds that they control as absolute rulers, or in slither-tunnels built into the walls of settlements. Such passages almost always link up with other tunnels and cellars into a large network of underground routes that are difficult for humanoids to traverse. Sewers, disused and expanded burial catacombs, and storage cellars under humanoid cities (particularly in the warmer parts of Faerûn) are also favored dwelling places for Scaled Ones who are interested in humans.

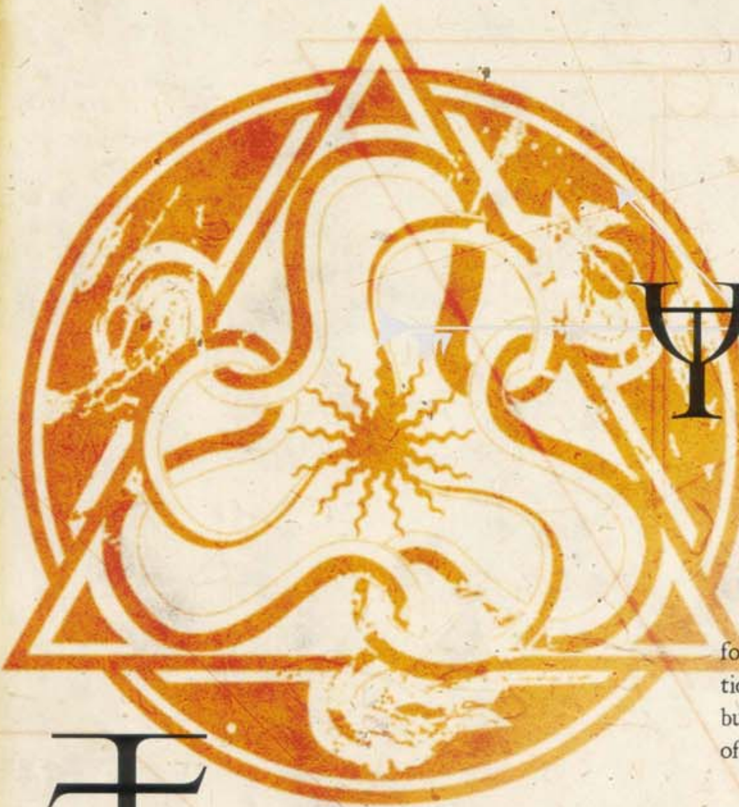
The Scaled Ones are patient, ever-present, and ruthless. Their advance is often very slow and subtle, extending over generations of humans. Often, they seek to change local beliefs and attitudes so that service to (and even worship of) yuan-ti or nagas comes to be seen as right, proper, and even holy—regardless of which human deities are locally venerated. Wise Scaled Ones never rush to act openly. Rather, they patiently await just the right moment to strike. When they do make their moves, they enact precisely the best strategy with cold calm to achieve the maximum possible effect.

Illustration by Joel Thomas



Inside the palace of the serpents

Yuan-Ti



The snakeheads, as the yuan-ti are generally known, are widely feared among humans. In places where these creatures have been discovered, the residents are justly fearful, and every ruin, sewer, and shadow is seen as a potential hiding place for fell serpentfolk who wait to feed on the unwary. The truth, however, is a little different.

Overview

The yuan-ti are the most powerful, successful, and favored creations of the sarrukh. Bred to be loyal and capable servants of their creators, they were trusted to act on their own initiative in furthering their scaly masters' agendas. Among the tasks that fell to the yuan-ti were the exploration and exploitation of new territory and the supervision and discipline of lesser servants. To better manage these widely varying responsibilities, the sarrukh bred several strains of yuan-ti, each with a physical form suited for a particular sort of task. To aid in the creation of servitor races, the sarrukh also developed and mastered a technique that would permanently alter the shape of any Scaled One.

All yuan-ti are highly intelligent, self-centered, and calculating. To humans, the typical yuan-ti seems ruthless, arrogant, coldly calm, patient, and prepared. Some, however—particularly those who operate alone or with nonscaled servitors—can become crazed and downright reckless.

Description

Sarrukh-controlled breeding and the centuries of free-willed mating that followed have established three basic natural forms for the yuan-ti: the pureblood, the halfblood, and the abomination. Details of these three kinds of yuan-ti, which make up the bulk of the race, can be found in the yuan-ti entry on page 262 of in the *Monster Manual*.

A few other yuan-ti forms also exist, though their numbers are few.

Purebloods

Yuan-ti that can pass for humans with suitable clothing, cosmetics, and magic are known as purebloods. These creatures are usually charged with infiltrating humanoid societies and managing covert operations that require direct contact with humanoids.

Halfbloods

A yuan-ti that possesses such obvious serpentine features as a fully scaled body, snakes instead of arms, a snake head, a snake tail, or serpent tails in place of legs is called a halfblood. Halfbloods form the bulk of a yuan-ti community's defense.

Abominations

An abomination either resembles a human-sized snake in every way or has only a single humanlike feature—typically a head or arms. Indeed, the classic yuan-ti featured in the fireside tales told among humans is a scaled snake with humanlike arms. This fearsome creature can invariably speak human languages and glide along upright so as to reach the height of a human. Many such stories erroneously claim that these fearsome creatures can shapechange at will into purebloods—often beautiful humanlike females whose snake blood is revealed only when they seduce human men or when their bodies are accidentally revealed. The truth behind such tales, of course, is that spells can enable any yuan-ti to transform temporarily into human form.

Anathemas

Above and apart from most yuan-ti is the rare anathema, which resembles a great, human-armed snake with six human heads. Such a creature possesses formidable powers and is thought to be a divine incarnation of Sseth, the yuan-ti god.

Almost all anathemas attract their own cults of yuan-ti who revere and dwell with them. These nascent tribes often outlive their founders to become lasting ha'srammass (great tribes). These fell creatures are described fully in the *Fiend Folio.*

Other Yuan-ti Subraces

The sarrukh also bred and developed a handful of yuan-ti specifically to perform certain specialized tasks. Through the centuries, these subraces, known as mageslayers and holy guardians, have bred true (see Chapter 6 for descriptions).

Racial History

Created by the sarrukh in the long-ago days of the Mhairshaulk Empire, the first yuan-ti were the results of controlled breeding experiments that melded early humans with serpents and sarrukh. Altered and augmented by sarrukh magic, they became the most powerful and successful of the "created" scaled races—more intelligent than the lizardfolk and more loyal and versatile than the nagas. The sarrukh favored the yuan-ti over these other creations and entrusted them with the most challenging tasks—those that required free will.

By and large, the yuan-ti were happy to serve in such capacities. As the depth and fervor of Sseth worship grew among them (carefully manipulated by certain sarrukh through generations of yuan-ti breeding), the yuan-ti increasingly viewed such service as right and fitting—the only proper aim and pursuit of their kind.

Yet the very growth of intellect, society, and faith among the yuan-ti inevitably weakened their obedience to their creators. At one time, the sarrukh held the power to compel obedience from individual yuan-ti, regardless of their personal wishes, but the creators gradually lost that ability as yuan-ti society grew stronger. The sarrukh still retained their power to alter yuan-ti bodies at will, however, and to this day they can still coerce individual yuan-ti into service by threatening to use this power against them.

As their civilization grew, yuan-ti began to covet the powers, possessions, and influence of the sarrukh. Though they admired sarrukh society and embraced its values and worldview (including the fact that lesser beings were meant to be slaves to their betters), they also came to see the sarrukh as lazy, decadent, and inattentive. The yuan-ti had always taken pride in their own accomplishments as players in sarrukh society, but increasingly they saw themselves as more worthy of Sseth's favor and rewards than their creators and began to resent their domination by "lesser beings."

Eventually, the Mhairshaulk Empire had weakened enough that outside forces (most notably dragons) decided to launch a concerted attack. These enemy forces crushed many of the sarrukh's lizardfolk armies, most of which were led by yuan-ti. This bloodbath led some yuan-ti to turn against their creators, and the three great empires of the sarrukh fell one by one. The dumbfounded sarrukh fled, hid, sank into hibernation, or perished.

The yuan-ti were free at last—or rather, they were free within the confines of their own customs and thinking. Over the centuries that followed, most yuan-ti forgot the sarrukh and came to consider themselves the most capable and powerful beings in all Faerûn. They felt that their eventual rise to world domination was inevitable if they went about the task properly.

In recent times, however, increasing numbers of yuan-ti have felt the call of the awakened sarrukh and trembled at what it might mean. The first unsettling revelation was that the yuan-ti can't resist the call; they are inexorably drawn to the sarrukh. The second was the discovery that the sarrukh can still alter yuan-ti bodies at will—specifically, they can slay a yuan-ti merely by changing her into a creature that can't breathe air. Thus, they can easily coerce one of their former servants into undertaking any task, regardless of the consequences to her life, social standing, and race. The third and most devastating revelation was that the yuan-ti still want to serve the sarrukh on a level far deeper than their conscious minds. The fawning and genuflecting that most yuan-ti find themselves performing in the presence of their old masters is far more than save-one's-scales playacting—it is the unfailing devotion of a servant to a master.

Outlook

To the yuan-ti, their race represents the pinnacle of sentient life. These confident, arrogant creatures see themselves as the most capable and cunning beings on Toril. They believe themselves the rightful masters of all Faerûn and are convinced that they can realize their goal of absolute mastery if they proceed deftly and wisely.

In order of importance, yuan-ti rank themselves first, their intimates and battle-comrades second, their immediate kin third, their tribe fourth, and their race fifth. Prudence tempers their innate sense of superiority only slightly, causing them to treat sarrukh with wary respect, nagas and obviously formidable scaly creatures (such as dragons and powerful wizards) with guarded politeness, other serpentine and reptilian beings as useful dupes or short-term allies, and all other creatures as cattle to be used as practicality demands.

Some yuan-ti maintain that any creature that defies or disobeys a yuan-ti must be either destroyed or broken to obedience. However, the goal of the race as a whole is to conquer and enslave others, not to butcher or eradicate them. All creatures have their uses, and when the yuan-ti achieve their rightful mastery over all life, the other races will serve as the slaves they were meant to be. After all, there is no victory or proud achievement in ruling a land that has been emptied of other life. Sseth teaches that the yuan-ti are destined to rule all—not slay all.

Older yuan-ti tend to be more interested in the diversity of the creatures found on Faerûn than their younger counterparts, but less tolerant of religious differences and circumstances that might suggest a change in yuan-ti practices. Younger yuan-ti are usually disgusted by direct dealings with other races—particularly when touching is involved—but more tolerant of proposed changes in yuan-ti customs than their elders are. Furthermore, the younger the yuan-ti, the more interest it is likely to exhibit in different worldviews held by other creatures. Only rarely does a yuan-ti of any age regard differing worldviews as in any way correct, but the younger ones find them interesting and often useful in manipulating other races.

Yuan-ti tend to be more fatalistic about death than humans are. They recognize that all living things die, and that death can come swiftly despite safeguards and scheming. Finite lifespans, however, are no excuse for undue haste or abandonment of the Sacred Way of Sseth. Dying in battle is always honorable, but a long life is also admired, provided that much has been accomplished during that time. To say that a yuan-ti has lived an empty or worthless life is a grave insult.

Self-Improvement

Most yuan-ti consider the variances among the subraces (from near-human to almost wholly serpent) to be part of Sseth's divine plan. Yuan-ti who embrace this philosophy believe that each individual should make the most of the particular form he was given, striving only to improve his magic, his wisdom, and his own creations (lesser creatures he has bred or augmented). To meddle with his own body is a sinful act, since it is already perfect for its purpose.

Other yuan-ti seek to augment or alter themselves directly with grafts and powerful spells. They view such immediate betterment as their deity's true plan for their race and view yuan-ti who shun such practices as lazy, unworthy cattle that deserve to be dominated and defeated by their wiser and more powerful fellows.

Debates on such matters have raged for centuries and show no signs of abating, since the opposing views are tied to deep religious divisions in this essentially devout race. But as the influence of the yuan-ti widens, so too do their views. Over time, they have become more and more like the divided, self-interested, infinitely adaptable humans they so despise.

Yuan-ti Society

Yuan-ti call themselves vrael olo (favored ones). This phrase is usually shortened in daily use to vrael and can be modified to auvrael (friendly or known yuan-ti) and duthrael (unfriendly or unfamiliar yuan-ti).

Social Hierarchy

In general, the more snakelike features a yuan-ti possesses, the higher its status in vrael olo society. Abominations have the highest status, followed by halfbloods, and finally purebloods. Mageslayers and holy guardians invariably hold high positions in yuan-ti society, ranking either above or below abominations depending on the proximity of temples and the perceived local threat of magically empowered Scaleless Ones. Within their subraces, yuan-ti are ranked by achievements and the demonstrated favor of Sseth.

Individual yuan-ti can sometimes increase their social status by acquiring more serpentine features through grafts (see the Appendix) and other magical means. But such an advance in status also requires moving to another geographical area, forsaking kin and tribe, and adopting a new name and a new identity. Such an altered yuan-ti typically does not gain as much status as a native member of the desired subrace would have because the duthrael in the new location invariably regard her as a stranger—most probably a spy for a rival tribe. Coupled with the loss of familial support and known contacts and sources, this natural mistrust ensures that most yuan-ti avoid such drastic moves.

Purebloods are the exception to this rule, since they flourish best when "hiding in plain view" among humans in human cities. They often move about to follow trade and pursue opportunities, just as humans do. Thus, they are the least likely to be closely tied to a tribe and the most likely to seek grafts and other serpentine augmentations to increase their status. They typically choose snakelike features that can be hidden from humans under clothing but quickly revealed in moments of threat or crisis.

Relationships

Even though yuan-ti need not love or even like their mates, they are capable of forming strong (though never quite trusting) relationships with others of their kind. The usual yuan-ti term of endearment (which translates into human vocabulary as a fondly spoken "dear" or "dear one") is t'iss'tess. This address is reserved for a yuan-ti's intimates—other vrael olo to whom she feels especially close. Her family bloodkin are her aha'ss, the individuals she dwells and works with compose her ssrath (lesser tribe), and the members of her greater tribe are her ha'srammass.

Life Cycle

Yuan-ti hatch from eggs in chambers monitored by broodguards. The hatchlings are always curious and eager to explore. They seek food immediately and may eat each other if sustenance is not at hand. Their initial training is provided by the broodguards that watch over the hatcheries. Vrael olo are trained in the use of their powers almost from hatching. When the young yuan-ti see danger or hear a warning, they turn into Tiny vipers and slither under the nearest cover.

In the prime of their lives, yuan-ti scheme, breed, and work on behalf of their tribes. Breeding with the "right" mates throughout life so as to produce even greater yuan-ti is a holy act for vrael olo, especially those who believe in the perfection of their own forms. Two prospective partners coldly measure one another's abilities and fitness for furthering the race, and if both agree that the match is promising, they usually mate, even if they personally dislike each other. After mating, yuan-ti females lay their eggs in brood chambers, marking each clutch with its parentage, then abandon them to the care of the broodguards.

Many yuan-ti grow lazy when they reach great age, sleeping or lying in torpor for longer and longer periods—first for days, then weeks, then seasons at a time, and finally years upon years. At last, they fail to wake at all, and their bodies rot and then mummify where they lie coiled.

Some aging elders grow irritable and bite anyone who awakens or disturbs them. A very few choose to go on a last great adventure, feebly seeking some thrill guaranteed to slay them. Most, however, seek to die in peace and luxury—preferably in walled country estates that they have purchased or seized, waited upon by deferential human slaves. Elderly yuan-ti are respected for their wisdom, and they aren't spurned or savaged by their more vigorous, younger fellows even after sinking into slumberous dotage.

organization

The yuan-ti of Faerûn are divided into seven great tribes (called houses) and one intertribal, not-so-secret society. The allegiance of any particular yuan-ti is based primarily on blood ties but can be modified by deliberate choice.

Charismatic local leaders like to gather their own ssrath. Most such lesser tribes consist primarily of outcasts from other tribes and individuals who are in disfavor with nearby families. Members of such a group rarely move from one house to another, but they may drop out of contact with their home tribes to operate independently, and occasionally they join with other ssrath to form new tribes.

Over the centuries, various greater tribes have risen and fallen. At the present time, seven yuan-ti houses flourish in Faerûn, along with a society called the Coiled Cabal. This organization is quite different in both nature and origin from the greater tribes, but it functions almost like one of them.

HOUSE ESELEMAS

Members of this house, known as Eselemaa, are known for their jungle stealth and battle-prowess. Those who hunt regularly possess the Prehensile Tail feat and are accomplished at wielding and hurling weapons with their tails. Such hunters always carry extra weapons with them for this purpose.

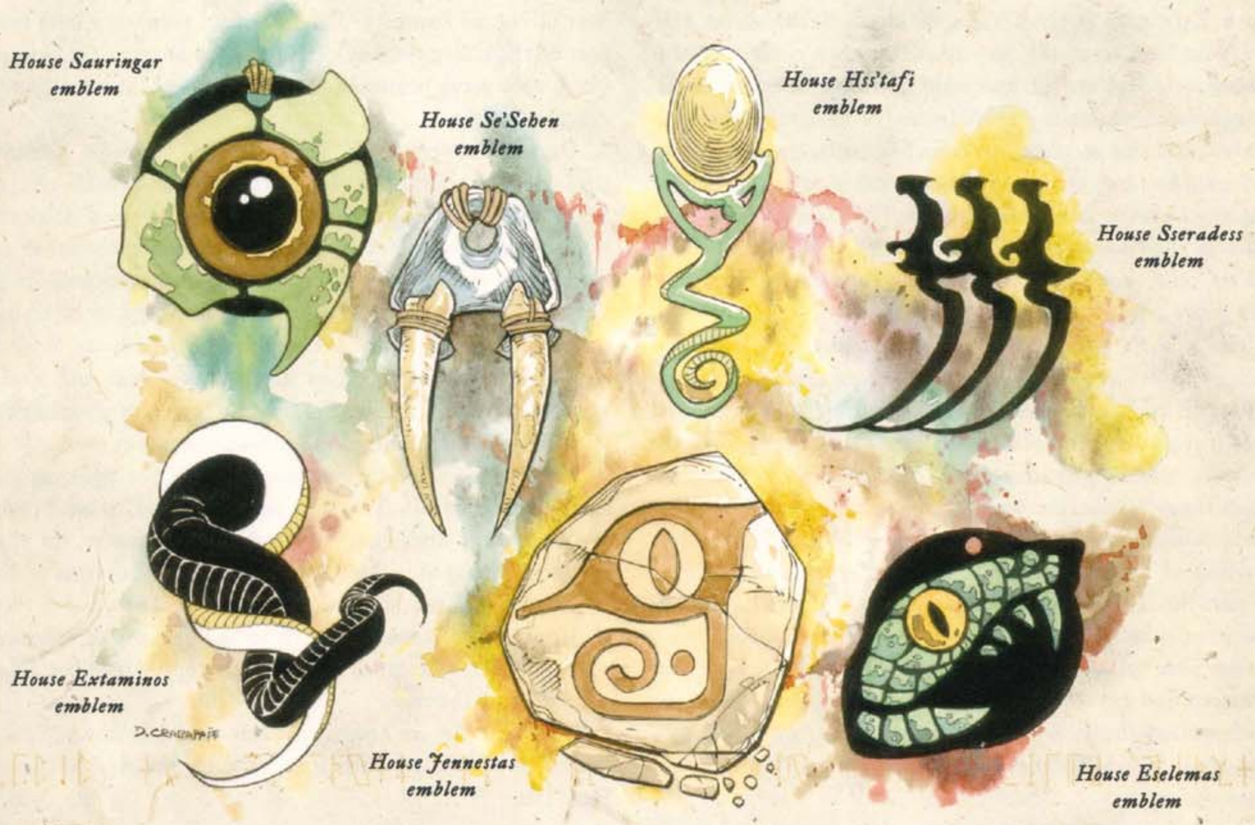


Illustration by Dennis Crabapple

At present, nine Eselemaa secretly rule Lushpool, forming the majority of its sixteen satraps. Though the number of Lushpan satraps has grown from the original seven mentioned in the ballad called "Seven Satraps," these rulers still remain masked and cloistered. The satraps keep to their luxurious, fortress-style compounds (known as asharlans), issuing written decrees through their human servants (who are often tainted ones). When they wish to address the populace, they summon Lushpan citizens to audiences and use spells to speak through the mouths of chained slave women.

Most other Eselemaa dwell along the shores of the Lapal Sea and throughout the northeasternmost Mhair Jungles. Their settlements form an "unseen serpent" that links the Lapal Sea with Lushpool via a twisting route that avoids the holdings of House Se'Sehen, their sworn enemy, as much as possible.

The enmity between House Eselemas and House Se'Sehen stems primarily from rival claims to certain key jungle areas. More than one Eselemas "beast hunt" in the jungles has turned out to be a thinly disguised war party seeking Se'Sehen—and vice versa. House Eselemas is allied with the Jennestas tribe, and the two houses have often fought together in the Black Jungles against House Se'Sehen. The Coiled Cabal also takes care to remain on good terms with the Eselemaa, since the port of Lushpool provides ready access to Tharsult, and through it to merchant shippers who can easily reach much of western Faerûn.

HOUSE EXTAMINOS

House Extaminos is an offshoot of House Se'Sehen, but the two tribes have remained close allies. The split occurred when two strong claimants for leadership of House Se'Sehen could not agree on who should prevail. Instead of instigating the kind of bloodbath that so often marks such disputes, the two claimants agreed to draw apart and allow the other Se'Sehen to rally around whichever leader they wished. The claimant who garnered the most support would gain mastery of House Se'Sehen, and the other would lead his followers elsewhere in Faerûn to form a new tribe.

The offshoot tribe ventured northeast in a long and dangerous journey to seek out new hunting grounds, eventually settling in the Ankhwood and the Chondalwood. But attacks from myriad foes weakened the tribe in both areas, and the survivors ultimately gathered and reformed their house in the Orsraun Mountains. Shortly thereafter, members of the nearby human noble House Extaminos of Hlondeth stumbled on rituals of Varae and began to "summon" yuan-ti to their aid. So many human-yuan-ti matings stemmed from this practice that yuan-ti blood now dominates the combined clan, whose members are called Extaminaar. House Extaminos now rules Hlondeth, and its members have erected a fine temple to Varae, which is called the Cathedral of Emerald Scales. Other Extaminaar can be found all across Faerûn, dwelling in hiding beneath human cities.

Extaminaar act as trade agents for the Se'Sehen, controlling local smuggling, slaving, and drug trading through the thieves' guilds and adventuring bands that they control, as well as other human agents. Almost all members of this house conduct personal experiments on captured creatures, employing spells, drugs, grafts, and various training processes to create loyal servants and guardians. The elders of the tribe approve of all such activities so long as such experimentation does not expose House Extaminos to wider public scrutiny in a particular human city, and any useful advancements are shared with the tribe. Thus, should any experiment produce a creature that could be of significant use (such as an aerial steed or a swiftly breedable soldier), the Extaminaar could quickly assemble numerous specimens to improve the tribe's chances of attaining true greatness.

Many Extaminaar choose to augment themselves with the Serpent Arms graft, thereby gaining extra appendages of astonishing length (up to 30 feet). They usually keep these "arms" coiled around their necks and shoulders underneath their robes to impart an impression of great size and girth. (For details of this body feature, see Yuan-ti Grafts in Chapter 10). Senior members of House Extaminos usually possess the Graft Yuan-ti Flesh feat.

HOUSE HSS'TAFI

The Hss'tafin, as members of this house are known, were plucked from the northwestern shores of the Lapal Sea and magically transported to the ruins of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun in the Year of Netted Dreams (−320 DR). Since then, they have been part of the ruling nobility of Najara, the Kingdom of Snakes, where they serve primarily as administrators, merchants, and religious leaders.

During the reign of Terpenzi, the Hss'tafin civilized the ophidian tribes and rebuilt the ruined sarrukh city of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun, along with its main temple complex. After the fall of Najara, members of this tribe were instrumental in reestablishing the rule of the nagara (dark naga descendants of Terpenzi) and discreetly transforming the Kingdom of Snakes into a major power of the Western Heartlands. House Hss'tafi also originated the process by which tainted ones and broodguards are created, but these techniques have now spread to the yuan-ti of Hlondeth and the Chultan peninsula as well.

The Hss'tafin see their ha'srammass as the most capable and practical of all. They are not too proud to work with and even serve under nagas (or other any creature, for that matter) if doing so will ultimately advance the designs of the holy Sseth and the rightful dominance of the yuan-ti race. Other vrael olo, however, see them as unprincipled schemers who shouldn't be trusted with a single copper coin, let alone the future of the race.

The Hss'tafin are known for their cobralike hoods. Snake-headed members of this tribe usually possess the Cobra Head feat.

HOUSE JENNESTAS

Sometimes derided by other yuan-ti as "backward vrael" and "half-witted wild ones," members of this house are allied with the Eselemas tribe against House Se'Sehen for control of large areas of the Black Jungles.

The Jennestaa, as members of House Jennestas are called, dwell in many small tunnel-holds within the Black Jungles. Strongest in numbers along the River Chun and in the ruins of Ss'yin'tia'saminass, they hold sway from Dolsel Gap to the River Lapar and rule openly in the human city of Mhairhetel. The City of Renegades, which welcomes pirates, slavers, and merchants on the run from less-than-honest dealings elsewhere, serves as a convenient port from which to trade with the wider world.

The High Lord of Mhairhetel is Istasfis Nsaran, who married the widow of Lord Rhaunister. Nsaran, the deceased Rhaunister, and all of the lords and ladies of the ruling Rhaunister family are actually junior pureblood Jennestaa. Though any of them can easily pass for human when suitably garbed, every Mhairheten knows that the Rhaunisters have "the blood of the jungle" in their veins and can speak with serpents. Citizens often whisper with each other about the Rhaunisters. "They're coming to get us," neighbors confide, "and if you go with them, and they bite you in their bedchambers, you grow scales and become their slave, winding up on your belly as a dumb, wriggling snake!" Whatever truth such tales may have, the Rhaunisters rule fairly, Mhairhetel remains wealthy, and patrols of human-sized serpents protect the city from jungle beasts and land attacks. Such Jennestaa patrols can be encountered on the eastern slopes of the Guth Mountains and at the eastern end of the Dolsel Gap.

The Jennestas tribe is the least interested of the yuan-ti houses in expanding its influence into human cities and "civilized" lands. Its members view the close contact that other yuan-ti seek with humanity as decadent, deliberate tainting of the race and direct manipulation of the Scaleless Ones as a weak-headed and wrong strategy. They maintain that their fellow yuan-ti have strayed from the rightful goal of world dominance and are thus doomed to inevitable failure.

The elders of House Jennestas believe that yuan-ti domination can be achieved only by reversing the process of civilization in humanoid lands and reclaiming the wilderness. Their tactics involve extending the jungles, shattering the agricultural base of cities, and allowing wild beasts to roam everywhere—with yuan-ti as their shepherds and masters. The Jennestaa use servitor beasts to break down walls, shatter bridges, and fell trees across roads, and they regularly sow jungle plants in farm fields. The Jennestaa refer to such projects as "fanging the edges of what humans and other so-called civilized cattle claim as their own."

Because of this attitude, only the lowest-ranking purebloods dwell in Mhairhetel, where the continued presence and rule of House Jennestas is tolerated by the majority of tribal elders only as an experiment in long-term human breeding. Other elders, however, see retaining Mhairhetel as crucial to the survival of the tribe—after all, if the Jennestaa retreat entirely into the jungles, House Se'Sehen can bar them from any contact with outsiders and slowly destroy them. The elders agree on only one issue—troublemakers in Mhairhetel must be removed swiftly. Such individuals are either devoured by senior Jennestaa as a delicacy, or snatched away to Ss'yin'tia'saminass to serve as subjects for breeding experiments.

The Jennestaa are also interested in capturing jungle beasts and rearing them in captivity, both for food and as experimental subjects. Their ancestors once bred and altered apes in search of a new serpent race, thereby seeding the jungle around Ss'yin'tia'saminass with many formidable apelike creatures that exhibited unusual powers. In the same way, the boldest Jennestaa now experiment on halflings abducted from Luiren (via a portal linking the southern Black Jungles to the Southern Lluirwood) and on humans abducted from surrounding lands.

The Jennestaa are known for their stealth and patience in battle. Warrior members of this tribe usually possess the Chameleon Hide feat, and most of them can remain motionless for hours, observing their surroundings through slitted eyes and clearly remembering minute details of what they've seen.

HOUSE SAURINGAR

The Sauringar tribe once dominated the Sanrach Basin, but its members were driven from their ancestral holdings in the Year of Many Serpents (605 DR), following the alliance of the local human populace with a powerful Nimbral Lord. Presently, the tribe maintains a strong presence in the Chultengar and a small one in the Samarlogh. Its members also control scattered holdings in northern Chult and northern Calimshan, which are tended by human cultists of Varae. The Sauringans are also the secret rulers of the independent city-state of Narubel.

The Sauringans are closely allied with the Se'Sehen tribe and the spirit nagas of the Chultengar. In addition, they have been working indirectly with the Rundeen merchant consortium of the Tashalar for centuries, supporting the Rundeen's protection policies through targeted acts of piracy. For decades, the Sauringans have subtly guided the Rundeen away from selecting leaders who exhibit the rampant ophiophobia common to most Tashlutans. This careful strategy has resulted in a newly forged alliance between the Se'Sehen tribe and the Rundeen, which has brought security to the far weaker Sauringans.

Members of the Sauringar tribe are known for their ability to expand the size of their bodies. Most Sauringans with serpentine torsos possess the Puff Torso feat.

HOUSE SE'SEHEN

The Se'Sehen tribe is currently the largest and most powerful in the Black Jungles. After House Hss'tafi vanished in the Year of Netted Dreams (–320 DR), the Se'Sehen seized the fallen tribe's lands—and with them control of Ss'inthee'ssaree and the Pit of Vipers. The Se'Sehen closely allied themselves with Sseth during his drive to establish the Serpentes Empire, and they were given control of the Tashalar Basin as a reward for their efforts.

In the Year of the Fallen Fury (20 DR), a decade after the disappearance of Sseth, the Se'Sehen were forced to withdraw from the Tashalar to their holdings on the northwest shores of the Lapal Sea. As a result of this defeat, they sank into centuries of somnolence.

Sseth's brief reappearance during the Time of Troubles has invigorated the Se'Sehen, prompting them to forge an insidious alliance with the Rundeen trade consortium of the Tashalar. The Se'Sehen exchange exotic spices and poisons for slaves and a means to transport their spies to ports in the north. The spies, assassins, and thieves of the Se'Sehen (including members of House Extaminos) are scattered throughout Faerûn, where they work to advance yuan-ti plans for domination of the surface world.

The Se'Sehren count the Extaminos and Sauringar tribes as their closest allies, but they clash frequently with the Coiled Cabal, since both groups see themselves as the rightful crafters of yuan-ti dominance in Faerûn. The Se'Sehren openly fight the Eselemas and Jennestas tribes even more frequently, since all three houses claim sections of the Black Jungles.

Members of the Se'Sehen tribe experiment extensively on other creatures of the Black Jungles. Their most successful creations are the serpentlike ti-khana, and the house is now served by the predatory ti-khana deinonychuses.

Se'Sehen are known for their ability to spit venom. Most of the snake-headed members of this tribe possess the Spit Venom feat.

HOUSE SSERADESS

The Sseradess once openly ruled the Thindol basin, but the defeat of their lizardfolk slave-soldiers by troops of the Shoon Imperium in the Year of Hounds (293 DR) forced them to retreat to their undersea holdings. For some time thereafter, members of House Sseradess ruled indirectly through agents who infiltrated the courts of Thindol. This strategy collapsed in the Year of Many Serpents (605 DR), when the agents of the Sseradess were unmasked and forced to concede defeat yet again.

The Sseradess currently dominate the waterways of Thindol and the subterranean passage known as Labrand's Folly. These holdings are isolated enough that the tribe counts no other yuan-ti tribe as a true ally or foe.

Ever since they lost control of Thindol, the Sseradess have been attempting to reassert their influence over the humans of that realm, but the wary vigilance of the rampant ophiophobes who dwell there has made progress difficult at best. The tribe has found much greater success in conquering the kuo-toa tribes of Gathgoolgapool (see Labrand's Folly in Chapter 7) and employing them to rule the watery depths.

The Sseradess employ kuo-toa as "farmers of the sea" to harvest fish, pearls, and certain seaweeds that are valuable to human alchemists and scent-makers. These marine products are sold through agents (or used for bribes) in Thindol. Certain Sseradess are growing impatient with the slow process of achieving real power there, however, so they are looking to hire—and ultimately control—some outlander adventurers who can add muscle to their intrigues ashore.

Members of this tribe are known for their ability to breathe and swim underwater. Most snake-necked Sseradess possess the Water Adaptation feat (see Feats in *Races of Faerûn*).

THE COILED CABAL

This secret society of arcane spellcasters is dominated by the Hss'tafin, but it draws members from all the great houses of the yuan-ti. Though the vrael olo do not consider it an independent tribe in its own right, it is often treated like one in intertribal politics, especially since membership requires that loyalty to the society take precedence over tribal allegiances. The mark of the Coiled Cabal is an S-shaped serpent with open-jawed heads at both ends.

The Coiled Cabal has power bases in the Great Petrified Serpent (Serpent Hills), Ss'kowlyn'raa (Forest of Wyrms), Semorav's Tower (Hlondeth), the ruins of Lhesper (Shaar), and at various ruins and settlements currently under construction in the Black Jungles. The society is allied with the Eselemas, Extaminos, and Hss'tafi tribes, but it often marches to its own drum. Members of the Coiled Cabal clash most frequently with the Se'Sehen tribe because both groups see themselves as the rightful leaders in the push for open dominance of Faerûn.

Cabal members work in "oumkathuss," small groups of a dozen or so individuals that independently undertake missions. In times of open strife, such missions are often handed down by superiors known as overhoods. At other times, however, each oumkathuss devises its own missions and submits its plans to an overhood for approval. An oumkathuss may report to more than one overhood, but usually no more than three. A Cabal member who personally knows more than three overhoods is likely to draw missions with a high likelihood of death in the field.

Overhoods in turn report to greater overhoods. The upper hierarchy of the Cabal is largely hidden and free of formal titles or rules, but it culminates in a council of seven leaders known informally as the Hooded Ones and more properly as the Iurcoil. These yuan-ti direct the Cabal in accordance with their own mysterious and complex plan. Its specifics and secrets are never shared, but thoughtful members who observe Cabal activities over time often conclude that the Hooded Ones' strategies have much to do with covert domination of certain individual humans. Many seem designed to subvert local rulers and arcane spellcasters of all kinds; others are obviously geared to shift the attitude of all humans against temples and priesthoods—probably to weaken clerical influence over the human societies of Faerûn.

Some yuan-ti believe that the Coiled Cabal wants to shatter the power of Sseth's clergy, reducing his priests to little more than entertainers who provide comforting rituals for the vrael olo. Whether or not the Cabal is pursuing such a goal, and whether that goal is a good or bad one are matters of hot and frequent debate among vrael olo. Some yuan-ti feel that Sseth's priests have already lost power over the populace, since increasing numbers of yuan-ti see their personal faith in Sseth as something that can be separated from obedience to clerics of the god.

Although the Hooded Ones do seem to have particular ends in mind, the Cabal is by no means a monolithic organization that unerringly pursues a single, coherent goal. Side intrigues flourish, and many seemingly unrelated projects are underway at any given time. Some Cabal overhoods, for example, direct their underlings to slay and frustrate members of the Red Wizards of Thay and the Cult of the Dragon at every opportunity. Others believe that those same organizations should be aided, strengthened, infiltrated, and conquered from within. In this way, they can become great new "Dark Arms" with which the yuan-ti can tame the teeming hordes of humanity.

The Coiled Cabal embraces a variety of behaviors as well as viewpoints. Some oumkathuss function very much like human adventuring bands, while others more closely resemble secretive, tower-cloistered wizards conducting magical research. Many Cabal members pursue small plots to enrich themselves, apparently with the tacit approval of their superiors. An exchange of threats often determines who holds superior rank when Cabal members meet, but impostors pretending to hold overhood or greater overhood rank are rare, thanks to various scrying and divination spells.

Households

Yuan-ti live in ordered, hierarchical groups known as households, each of which is governed by a strict chain of command. The members of a household are related by either blood or mating. Any yuan-ti who breaks the chain of command—either by defying orders or by reporting to a superior other than the one directly above him—is regarded with suspicion and distaste. Such a transgression is usually accompanied by a formal loss of status that results in a lower position on the chain of command. Such a demotion may not occur if senior yuan-ti dispute with each other over the issue at hand and a majority of their kin don't strongly side with either one of them. Persistent breakers of the hierarchy, however, are cast out or even slain in "accidents" that everyone in the household knows were not accidents at all.

Young and ignorant yuan-ti are permitted a few transgressions against authority, but they are sharply reprimanded and punished by curbs on their behavior for such indiscretions. Heirs, lovers, and other favored yuan-ti who defy their elders are typically punished with dangerous missions. Those who return are entirely forgiven until the next time they defy authority.

For non-yuan-ti, breaking the chain of command means death, though its manner depends on the status of the individual. A slave valued for diligent, long-term service becomes a sacrifice to the gods. One in disfavor usually becomes food after being punished and then slain by other slaves. A captive or a slave of marginal status is often hunted for sport and casually maimed, then sent to the stewpots or simply devoured alive.

Most yuan-ti consider it good form to anticipate what orders an elder plans to issue, and to read small clues of manner, tone of voice, and attitude so as to react accordingly before an order is given. But only the most deranged priests of Sseth (and then only those in the temple hierarchy) expect other yuan-ti to know what's expected of them without being told, or try to punish those who don't manage to read their minds.

Orders are always given politely and quietly. An eye blink, tail tap, or nod indicates that an order has been heard. If no such signal is forthcoming after a few moments, the order is repeated just as politely, but often slightly more loudly, and usually from closer range. Eye contact is established in conjunction with a repeated order if possible.

Pointed refusal to acknowledge orders is normally dared only by elders and yuan-ti who believe themselves of equal or superior rank to the issuer of the order. A yuan-ti may also be temporarily exempt from authority by virtue of cult membership, orders from another, higher superior, or status as the emissary of a temple or tribe.

ELDERS

Vrael olo households differ in how they treat ailing elders. Such family members are rarely attacked or slain, primarily because doing so would establish a precedent for similar mistreatment of the perpetrators in their dotage. Most yuan-ti households ensure that such elders are properly fed and housed, and otherwise simply ignore them—especially if they have shown a tendency to bite when disturbed. A few entrust them with certain key family secrets, so as to keep ambitious younger family members in check. Yuan-ti who need the favor of these failing elders to access family magic items or specific wealth tend to become much more cooperative, resourceful, and respectful than those who do not. As an added benefit, vrael olo who have cared properly for an ailing elder can ensure the support of bloodkin outside the household in future disputes, whether that elder still lives or not.

Some yuan-ti plan for retirement well in advance, purchasing luxurious walled country estates in which they can live out their final years. When they sense their faculties beginning to fail, they relinquish their status within the household and take up residence in their own palatial manors, where they can rule supreme over deferential human slaves and die slowly and peacefully. Elders who refuse to give up their positions to those more able or who otherwise defy the authority of the ssrath are often seen as irritants. Rather than slaying them, however, their families often buy them out, settling them in comfortable retirement elsewhere. Families choosing this route usually either purchase or seize a human dwelling of appropriate luxury.

Almost all yuan-ti respect the property and person of a yuan-ti elder living in retirement, regardless of tribe or politics. Invading an elder's walled compound, stealing his property, or committing violence against his person or slaves is simply not done. Dozens of such palatial mansions (particularly in the wilder eastern fringes of Calimshan and the southern backlands of the Tashalar) house frightened human slaves who try to ignore the withered corpse of a dead yuan-ti master in their midst, or live their lives around the coiled, immobile form of an elder who's been asleep for decades.

Funereal Customs

Vrael olo funeral rites vary from tribe to tribe, ssrath to ssrath, and temple to temple. Some yuan-ti burn or just abandon corpses, but many try to glean scales or skins from the dead before leaving the remains to decay in the open or burying them under small stone cairns. A few favor feeding the dead to certain local monsters, which are thereafter treated as oracles of a sort because they have "swallowed the memories" of the deceased. Yuan-ti wishing to divine the future simply observe the creatures' behavior and interpret it according to certain little-known guidelines. The bodies of tribal elders or leaders are usually treated with more reverence than those of lesser members of the tribe, and yuan-ti priests are almost always ritually burned on the altars of their deities.

The Extaminos, Sauringar, and Se'Sehen tribes employ a ritual known as "to the egg return." First, they wash and arrange their dead in as intact a manner as possible, even sewing on or magically reattaching severed body parts. Once so prepared, corpses are bound in clean linen and shrouded in windings—pieces of cloth that have been tied together into long, continuous strips and treated with resins. The end results are oval balls that resemble the eggs from which the dead yuan-ti once hatched. These "eggs" are then walled up in secret caves to mummify. Such caverns are opened only to add more dead, or for adornment with tribal relics or trophies.

Dwellings

Vrael olo can adapt to many environments. In most cases, they utilize whatever is readily available in their target area to build homes.

JUNGLE

Jungle-dwelling yuan-ti often take control of overgrown stone ruins left behind by other races. If no such option is available, they construct abodes in trees or tunnels.

Yuan-ti tree homes are usually gigantic trees that stand isolated in swamps. Interior spiral wriggle-tunnels link each tree with underground passages and perhaps even other trees.

Extensive tunnel systems in the jungle can quickly become choked by fast-growing roots, and all manner of creatures can invade them. Thus, retaining control and ensuring free passage through such tunnels is a constant battle that often costs many slave lives.

HILLS

Yuan-ti hill homes are natural or artificial mounds riddled with dwelling-dens and encircled by concentric walls. In the center are the actual living spaces. Subsequent rings enclose storage areas, lookout and spellcasting towers, livestock, and finally a "maze" ring studded with traps through which only two tortuous but safe routes exist. The outermost ring beyond the maze is where guardian beasts (experimentally altered jungle monsters of all sorts) roam. These creatures are kept hungry and are thus eager to attack any non-yuan-ti—or anyone else they're ordered to devour.

OTHER TERRAIN

Most yuan-ti that inhabit the more "civilized" areas of Faerûn prefer to live in subterranean crawl-tunnels or in structures built of stone. In cold regions, such dwellings always extend below frost level to where the temperature remains fairly constant. If volcanic activity or other subterranean sources of warmth are present, yuan-ti tunnels always encircle such features.

LAIR FEATURES

Yuan-ti prefer the walls of their dwellings to be smooth and free of certain molds and fungi. Beyond that, they are not especially picky—they don't mind the presence of vapors, the litter that accumulates in ruins, or minor incursions by other creatures (such as edible birds and small, furry forest-dwellers).

If possible, narrow crawl-tunnels are built into each yuan-ti lair to slow or stop large invaders. "Sunning ledges" and other warmed places are provided so that vrael olo and other reptilian inhabitants can readily access a comfortable range of temperatures.

Most yuan-ti dwellings contain at least one ssarramath, or prayer-focus to Sseth. Such a feature may be as simple as a snake-headed spiral scratched on a wall, or as elaborate as a life-sized, hand-carved stone snake balancing upright on its tail. A statue of this sort invariably features back-and-forth loops of coils similar to those of a caduceus. It stands in a smooth, carved bowl that can be filled with flammable, scented oil—and the bodies of sacrifices.

Yuan-ti that build anew or have sufficient resources (time and slaves) to reshape the ruins they inhabit often create sloping walls that are fairly smooth and pierced by many slither-holes linking chamber to chamber. Broken rock and rubble are cleared away, and foliage that blocks the sun from shining directly on at least one area of the ruin is cut back. Horizontal tree trunks or stone pillars are installed in large chambers to serve as resting perches and high refuges against intruders. Yuan-ti who make use of osssra oils (see Osssra in Chapter 10) usually also pierce walls, ceilings, and floors with vent tunnels that allow the smoke to drift from a burning-chamber into other areas of a dwelling.

DWELLING DECOR

In yuan-ti dwellings, mosaics dominated by sinuous curves are common, and silken, translucent tapestries are favored by many. The chambers of the wealthy tend to be dominated by trophies and slither-rubs—decorative sculptures with sharp edges situated to allow a chipped or dangling scale to be rubbed off with ease.

Slitherglows are especially popular with yuan-ti of high social status. These liquid, ever-shifting "paintings" consist of flat glass vessels filled with many-hued oils that swirl when heated from below by small oil-lamp flames. A wall-mounted slitherglow may be painted with a lone serpent eye on one side, which is revealed at random times by the shifting swirls of oil.

Vrael olo often cut shallow pools into the floors of their dwellings, or fashion great bowls with slither-ramps ascending both their inner and outer surfaces. Such vessels are often filled with scented oils that the yuan-ti can glide through or bask in to banish the stink of human contact, to keep his scales from drying or becoming brittle, or simply for the sensual pleasure of remaining fully supple. Many yuan-ti like to dream deep thoughts for hours whilst thus soaking, sometimes enshrouded in thick clouds of pungent osssra smoke.

Yuan-ti characters

Yuan-ti purebloods are suitable as player characters, as are the yuan-ti creations known as tainted ones and, in some cases, broodguards. See the Racial Traits Table in the Appendix for the traits of these three subraces.

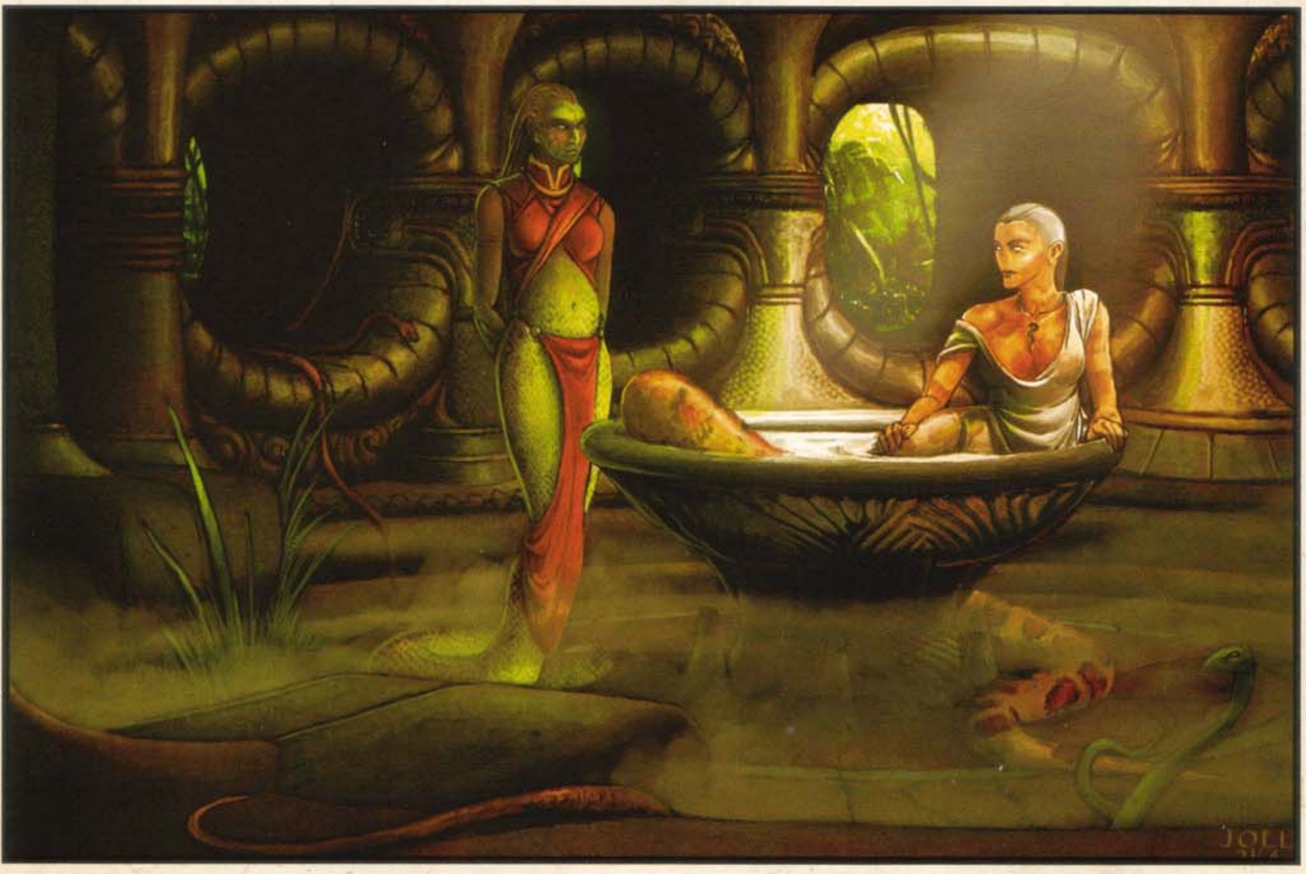
purebloods

Pureblood travel throughout Faerûn, infiltrating human societies everywhere. Most can easily disguise their snakelike features to pass for humans. Typically, purebloods serve as spies and agents, carrying out the plots of higher-ranking yuan-ti. Some, however, are ambitious enough to make their own plans, and a few even leave their fellow yuan-ti and embrace human society completely. Such purebloods can make enjoyable player characters.

Tainted ones and Broodguards

Tainted ones are yuan-ti servitors created from humans who drink a distillation of yuan-ti venom mixed with certain roots and herbs. The recipe for this mixture is a closely guarded secret that, despite much energetic spying, hasn't yet spread to every tribe of the vrael olo.

A human who drinks the mixture, willingly or not, must make a DC 16 Fortitude saving throw. Success means an immediate lapse into a coma, followed by death 1 hour later. Failure leaves the imbiber sickened and requires an immediate DC 15



Yuan-ti house interior

Illustration by Joel Thomas

Constitution check. Success on this check begins a painful and permanent change into a tainted one during the next 1d6 days. Failure means a groggy, torpid transformation into a broodguard over a period of 1d6+6 days.

Onrushing death from a failed Fortitude save isn't necessarily an escape from yuan-ti servitude. During the hour in which such a creature lies comatose, it can be revived with a delay poison or neutralize poison effect. Yuan-ti halfbloods and abominations often use their neutralize poison ability to revive a victim so that they can administer the mixture again, necessitating a new Fortitude save. They repeat the attempt as often as necessary until they gain a servitor rather than a human corpse.

Humans can be rescued from either transformation by at least two magical methods. Casting neutralize poison, dispel magic, remove curse, and heal on the victim (in that order) reverses the transformation in half a day, but the rescued human permanently loses 1 point of Intelligence in the process. Alternatively, a properly worded wish, limited wish, or miracle spell can undo the change instantly with no loss of Intelligence. Once the transformation is complete, only a wish or miracle spell can restore a tainted one or broodguard to its former human state.

Only humans can be successfully transformed with this mixture. Any other humanoid that drinks it must make the same DC 16 Fortitude saving throw, but success leaves the imbiber sickened for 1d4 rounds, and failure results in a coma, followed by death in 1d4+1 rounds.

BROODGUARDS

Broodguards begin their service to the yuan-ti as low-ranked slaves. Naked and unarmed except for their claws and teeth, they stand guard in and around the brood chambers. Broodguards eat and sleep at their posts, never leaving the vicinity of the brood chambers except to move eggs and hatchlings under yuan-ti supervision when the community is threatened. See the broodguards entry in Monsters of Faerûn for more information.

TAINTED ONES

Though tainted ones serve primarily as spies and agents in human cities, they are also frequently employed as bodyguards and stealthy strike forces by pureblood yuan-ti working in human settlements. Tainted ones who outlive their yuan-ti masters often become free agents in the shadowy underworlds of the human cities where they formerly served. A few even betray their masters, pitting the agents of one yuan-ti tribe against another, or arranging for humans to catch and destroy their vrael olo masters. A few masterless tainted ones make their livings as slavers, poison dealers, and fences for yuan-ti of many tribes seeking to do business in a given city. Such businesses are lucrative, and rumor has it that least one tainted one amassed sufficient wealth to purchase his own escape back into true humanity by hiring a good-aligned archmage to cast a wish spell upon him.

Magic of the Yuan-ti

Yuan-ti are masters of experimentation, both magical and otherwise. The vrael olo have had centuries to reap the benefits of sarrukh sorcery and the research of thousands of inspired nagas and yuan-ti ancestors. Thus, the depth and variety of arcane spells at their command rival those of the most magically mighty human cultures. Through their own research, the yuan-ti have developed subtle variants of many human-created spells that paralyze creatures or move them from afar. A few anathemas can also use *ability rip* and *trait removal* (see Chapter 11).

Yuan-ti are always developing new spells and new variants of established dweomers. Thus, an encounter with yuan-ti spellcasters, especially Coiled Cabal members, presents a situation of unpredictable danger.

Many spells widely known among yuan-ti are described in Chapter 11. These include *fang trap, razorscales, serpent arrow, venom bolt,* and *whirl of fangs.*

Deities of the Yuan-ti

At the time the yuan-ti were created, the sarrukh empires were monotheistic societies that worshiped the World Serpent. All other gods were viewed as inferior blasphemies, and the sarrukh believed that those who worshiped them should be either turned to the veneration of the Great Scaled One or destroyed.

After the Mhairshaulk Empire fell, many yuan-ti sought different fragments of the World Serpent to lead them to the truth, hoping to leave behind the dark decadence of their former masters. Most of these gods were forgotten long ago, but the worship of Sseth took root and became the foundation of modern-day yuan-ti religion. Today, the majority of yuan-ti worship Sseth with a strength and fervor that astonishes other beings.

Some yuan-ti, however, still search for other gods to follow—usually because their own self-importance demands that they become the most favored mortal devotees of their divine patrons, and doing so is easier when there are few other worshipers with whom to compete. In particular, the worship of the older gods Merrshaulk, Sss'thasine'ss, and Varae still thrives in certain areas. Varae is secretly worshiped by many pureblood yuan-ti who dwell in and under human cities and have come to prefer the bustle and color of such settings to their own realms. Merrshaulk is often venerated by outcast or wandering yuan-ti, particularly those who restlessly travel Faerûn's wild places and glory in hunting dangerous beasts. Some such yuan-ti believe that by worshiping Merrshaulk, they are shedding the decadence of their own culture and bypassing the "inevitable failure" of following the ways of Sseth.

Many yuan-ti cults form around anathemas. Some of these creatures claim to be awakened older gods; others proclaim themselves entirely new deities. At present, this latter category includes Beliss'ss'rae, Olome, Phelriss, Sssravvan, and T's'tranth, whose worshipers have clashed openly with other yuan-ti and occasionally raided human caravans. Other such pretenders to divinity doubtless exist but have thus far managed to remain hidden.

sseth, the slitherer supreme

For most yuan-ti, there is Sseth and only Sseth. The other serpentine deities that some vrael olo have worshiped over the years have all been either masks worn by Sseth or false faces of the fell deities venerated by Scaleless Ones. These latter beings seek always to subvert yuan-ti from the truth of Sseth and lead them into decadent indolence, loss of power, and ultimate betrayal and destruction.

Sseth whispers in dreams, speaks directly through his priests, and on rare occasions even appears to his faithful. More often, however, the Slitherer Supreme leaves signs in the smoke of his temples after suitable sacrifices of life have been made on his altars.

Sseth guides in mysterious ways, leading his faithful toward ever-greater power and eventual supremacy over the world. The path to dominance that he reveals, however, is invariably a winding, veiled, and subtle one rather than the destructive and brutal route of conquest embraced by humanoids.

THE SACRED WAY OF SSETH

Devout worshipers of Sseth may express the god's creed in different ways, and indeed many fall to arguing over its specifics. In general, however, they all believe in the following tenets.

Sseth guards secrets to make his believers strong, imparting hints and aid to faithful followers subtly and sparingly. Those who use the god's gifts to achieve power and success are pleasing to Sseth and worthy of rewards ranging from rebirth after death to augmentation with increased powers, such as serpentine limbs, stronger venom, or greater mastery of magic.

All secrets are known to Sseth. He yields them up sparingly in return for service he finds pleasing, such as achievements that benefit all vrael olo, sacrifices made in his name or upon his altars, and obedience to the priests of Sseth and orders from the god himself.

All yuan-ti must act in accordance with the Sacred Way of Sseth—that is, subtly. Whenever possible, vrael olo should choose manipulation over open confrontation, the whisper over the fang, and subterfuge over battle spells. Those who follow the Sacred Way of Sseth know their foes, think ahead, plan forward, and slither well.

SACRIFICES TO SSETH

The Slitherer Supreme hears all prayers from his yuan-ti followers, but he is likely to dispense actual aid only when the sacrifice of life accompanies the request. Any sort of intelligent creature (that is, one with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher) is a suitable sacrifice, though some creatures are more pleasing to the god than others. Sacrifices rank in desirability according to the list below.

- A scaled creature that submits willingly to death in Sseth's name.
- Any sort of scaled creature.
- A Scaleless One with arcane spellcasting ability or a natural spell-like power.
- A Scaleless One with great personal power or achievements.
- Any other sort of Scaleless One.

In any of these categories, a more formidable creature is always more pleasing to Sseth than a small and insignificant one. Thus, an ogre experienced in battle is far more worthy than a halfling infant.

Fervor of feeling while conducting a sacrifice is more important to the Slitherer Supreme than the total number or frequency of sacrifices offered. Sacrifices are expected whenever a worshiper needs to atone for straying from the Sacred Way, but they are entirely optional for worshipers who have been diligently following the wishes of Sseth, as communicated personally in dream-visions or by his priests. The manner in which the ritual is conducted and the attitude of the victim also have a bearing on the acceptability of the sacrifice.

An ideal sacrificial victim is one that submits willingly to death for the glory of Sseth. Few Scaleless Ones are truly happy about dying for Sseth, but yuani-ti and other Scaled Ones often see some benefit in giving themselves wholly to the god.

Next most prized are victims that participate willingly in preparing themselves for sacrifice. Potential sacrifices are usually offered all they desire of food, drink, treasure, company, and favors. Yuan-ti frequently offer aid in slaying a hated rival or righting a perceived wrong, then slyly drug their intended victims' food or drink so as to render them unable to resist.

In the third rank of acceptability are creatures slain in Sseth's name on an altar of Sseth by a worshiper employing either a melee weapon or her own fangs. Sacrificial victims slain by spells or bound so as to hamper resistance are less desirable.

A trussed, terrified, struggling victim is the least desirable sacrifice of all. Offering up such a victim requires little effort, almost no risk, and not much subtlety, so it is unlikely to impress the god.

The sacrifice is best performed by either biting away some of the victim's throat or face or biting off an extremity (usually a hand). Either way, death results from blood loss, not from poison or other means. The slayer should slither through the victim's blood while praying aloud to Sseth.

Specific rewards for sacrifices are given in Chapter 2 of the *Book of Vile Darkness*. Alternatively, the supplicant may receive cryptic replies to specific questions, either as hissed words in the mind or as visions. Other options for rewards include healing (whole or partial restoration of lost hit points) while in contact with the sacrificial altar, ready-to-cast spells (placed directly in the recipient's mind), or spontaneous, on-the-spot alterations of form (purebloods into halfbloods, or serpentine features akin to the grafts detailed in Chapter 10).

THE ANSWERED PRAYERS OF SSETH

Almost all priests of Sseth are serpent-headed halfbloods, but the most powerful are often multiple-headed yuan-ti. Sseth accepts, ordains, and ranks his priests in dream-visions. No yuan-ti can declare himself a priest of Sseth or remain one without the agreement of the Slitherer Supreme. If any yuan-ti counterfeits priestly status in any place sacred to Sseth, the god is instantly aware of it and may inform any true priests on that consecrated ground via visions, telepathy, or other remote communication.

The clergy of Sseth tend and clean the god's sacred places and prevent defilements and intrusions of nonbelievers other than sacrifices. His priests also breed, rear, feed, and train the snakes that serve as temple messengers and errand runners, and they manage and dispense all temple caches of poisons, osssra oils, and monetary and magical treasures. Furthermore, they are charged with communicating the will of Sseth to all yuan-ti within their reach and with giving holy orders in times of tribal strife or war with Scaleless Ones. In addition, they continually monitor yuan-ti society for signs of disloyalty to Sseth and perils to all vrael olo.

THE DEEP TRUTH

For at least an age, Sseth has been growing more lethargic, often sleeping for centuries at a time but continuing to grant spells to his priests in his dreaming. In the Time of Troubles, Sseth appeared over the black Jungles as a giant, winged, magic-using snake and exhorted his priests to gather their strength. Shortly thereafter, while asleep in his lair, Sseth was magically bound into a deeper captivity by the deity Set, working through minions such as the Okothian sarrukh.

Set "became" Sseth, assuming his portfolio and all of the aspects he'd already subsumed, including Varae and Merrshaulk. He usurped Sseth's place as lord of the yuan-ti and the source of their divine magic. To mark his assumption of Sseth's portfolios, Set created the creatures known as wereserpents (see Chapter 6). All yuan-ti now receive divine spells from Set, even though they believe they're receiving them from Sseth or some other vrael olo deity.

The majority of yuan-ti still believe that Varae, Merrshaulk, Sss'thasine'ss, Set, and Sseth are all separate entities, and that Sseth reigns supreme. Most either know nothing about the strife of Set and Sseth (see the Racial History of the sarrukh in Chapter 5), or don't want to know anything about it. Those who dare to speak directly about the matter insist that Sseth is troubled by disloyalty among the vrael olo, and it must be rooted out. Beyond that, they leave divine matters to Sseth and concentrate on and obeying the priests of Sseth and living their lives in accordance with the Sacred Way. They fervently believe that if enough yuan-ti focused on those tasks, the troubles would end and all vrael olo would rise to their rightful triumph.

In truth, Sseth is slumbering fitfully, and portions of his nightmares have been visited upon his followers since the Time of Troubles. These disturbing and increasingly frequent dreams have convinced most yuan-ti and non-Okothian sarrukh that Sseth is angered or upset. Many of them have performed repeated divinations to discover what's happening. Through their efforts, they have learned that Sseth is distressed and desires them to do something, though what that might be is not clear. This knowledge has prompted a few yuan-ti to undertake quests of widely varying sorts, and vrael olo priests to order an even greater variety of strange practices.

A very few of Sseth's followers are aware that the god is in some way losing a battle with another deity, and that the Okothian sarrukh are somehow to blame. Those privy to this knowledge are keeping quiet about it for now in hopes of learning more about the threat and what they can do about it before they spread the word among the tribes. The Okothian sarrukh know exactly what Set did, but they have intentionally been misleading the yuan-ti and sowing discord among them to delay vrael olo investigations and prevent any agreement about what to do.

At present, the yuan-ti who pray to Sseth receive spells from Set, whose domains are Air, Darkness, Evil, Hatred, Law, Magic, and Scalykind. The real Sseth's domains are Air, Animal, Chaos, Evil, Knowledge, Magic, Planning, Scalykind, and Trickery. If Sseth is ever freed, his worshipers will have access to his domains but not those of Set.

Relations with other Races

The yuan-ti regard most other races as inferior, but their precise attitude varies according to the degree of serpent nature each race possesses.

Sarrukh

The yuan-ti recognize that the now-rare sarrukh have power over their race by the will of Sseth himself. After all, the divine Sseth made the sarrukh his personal emissaries and servants many eons ago, naming them the Claws of Sseth and granting them the ability to create other serpent races. Not only did the sarrukh create the yuan-ti, but they also have the ability to alter yuan-ti bodies at will. Thus, the vrael olo typically obey, fear, and even fawn over any sarrukh they encounter.

On the other hand, the yuan-ti also remember the sarrukh as lazy and decadent beings—indeed, a few of them were even found unworthy of Sseth's favor in the past. Thus, a constant watch must be kept upon them, so that worthy yuan-ti cannot lose Sseth's favor or endanger their fellows by following foolish or overly selfish sarrukh commands.

Other Reptiles

To a yuan-ti, witless reptiles are kin of a sort, though they are obviously lesser creatures that must be made to see their "rightful places" as inferiors. Thus, the yuan-ti are free to exploit, tame, enslave, and use such creatures as desired. Dragonkin, pterafolk, and the like are a measure better, but they are still regarded as inferiors rather than allies.

Most yuan-ti respect dragons for their great powers and longevity and nagas for the fell magic they control. Shapechangers that have access to reptilian wereforms are obviously touched by Sseth; thus they are viewed as mysterious and holy creatures that have a rightful purpose, even though they are inferior to yuan-ti. Lizardfolk are stupid but physically powerful and therefore useful as allies and servants.

Scaleless Ones

Like the sarrukh that created them, yuan-ti loathe all nonscaled species, regarding them as inferior beings. Humanoids' completely unscaled bodies are unsettling to the yuan-ti—indeed, some abominations regard human bodies as obscene and the humanlike pureblood yuan-ti as little better. Furthermore, humans in particular have an odor that is offensive to the yuan-ti—hence the custom of applying heavy perfume to the skin in areas controlled by the serpentfolk.

Yuan-ti regard humanoid attitudes as base and strange, and their overly excited mannerisms grate on the yuan-ti nerves. Humans and their ilk are always "busy," and most are completely untrustworthy. The most prudent tactic is to control them through drugs or coercion—or, more simply, eliminate those that serve no useful purpose.

However, many yuan-ti who dwell among humans for extended periods of time grow to regard them as fascinating and often surprising beasts that can provide endless entertainment. Some yuan-ti even come to admire certain humans and enjoy particular human customs, viands, fashions, and games.

Yuan-ti Equipment

Since the yuan-ti consider themselves the most perfect of all beings, they use only the best equipment available—typically of at least masterwork quality. After all, the finest creatures deserve the finest tools.

Yuan-ti Encounters

Player characters can encounter a yuan-ti warband on a jungle trail, or en route to a major yuan-ti temple with sacrifices in tow. Such a band usually consists of 1d12+1 purebloods, 1d4+1 halfbloods, and 1d3+1 abominations. Small gangs of purebloods undertaking a mission in a human city often consist of as few as 1d3+1 yuan-ti.

Ready-to-Use Villains and Allies

In any Forgotten Realms campaign, adventurers worthy of their reputations must inevitably come to grips with yuan-ti. The two pureblood opponents detailed below might be encountered skulking in the sewers or cellars of a human city. More formidable sample villains appear in Chapter 8.

Mruthlissk

Mruthlissk was the offspring of yuan-ti who'd been forced to take part in breeding experiments. His parents fled with the rest of their ssrath when strife erupted within their tribe (just which tribe, Mruthlissk never knew). For generations, the ssrath moved north, slithering from jungles to forests and moving on whenever they encountered other yuan-ti. Mruthlissk was hatched in the eastern fringes of the High Forest, where strange monsters were many. The casualties among his scaly kin rose precipitously, and he was soon orphaned.

The rest of his ssrath scattered shortly thereafter, leaving Mruthlissk on his own. For years he lived wild, hunting the fringes of the forest for food, until he reached a section of its western flank that was not far north of Secomber. There he began to track lone prospectors, small bands of foresters, and other humans who frequented the forest. Night after night, he lay still on the forest floor beyond the firelight of encamped humans, listening to their talk of wealth, cut-and-thrust trade, and life in human cities. When his targets fell asleep, he pounced upon them and slew them, taking their goods for his own. But the conversations he heard stuck with him, preying on his mind until he began to crave the chance to taste life in the world of humans for himself.

The threat of an early, cold winter finally drove Mruthlissk to hunt beyond the forest along the trade roads. There, he followed several bands of folk who were hurrying to Silverymoon ere "snowdeep." It became his habit to don the clothes of his earlier victims and fall in with small groups of travelers, sizing them up as prey. One night, the cold drove him to seek firewarmth with a group consisting of a few armored men and many women bundled up and shivering in heavy furs and hide cloaks. A few moments of conversation revealed that the group was actually a troupe of dancers bound for Silverymoon, and two of their men had already been lost to wolves on the journey. Mruthlissk offered himself as a replacement and spent that winter in Silverymoon, learning on the job.

When spring came, Mruthlissk accompanied the troupe south to Waterdeep, then promptly vanished, heading for the warmer coastal cities of Amn. From there, he began to tour the human settlements of Faerûn in disguise, seeking a place where he could make his fortune and settle down. Mruthlissk loves dancing and views it as a perfect cover, since entertainers can enter human cities at will. But he dreams of becoming a respectable merchant in the right port—a pillar of the community who can host minstrels and dancers at feasts by day while running a rich smuggling and slaving operation from his own harbor-connected cellars by night. Such an arrangement would allow him to hunt and slay trade rivals as well as traitors in his own shady organization, thus ridding himself of annoyances while satisfying his own bloodlust.

To make this dream real, Mruthlissk needs money, trade contacts, and that "right port." Thus, he has taken up adventuring—a lifestyle that he very much enjoys.

Mruthlissk may be encountered alone or in the company of 1d6 human rogues, thugs, or dancers. If his companions are dancers, then he is temporarily performing as part of their group to earn food, shelter, and a few coins while subtly making his own contacts within the area. Rogues or thugs who travel with him are local "shady talent" with whom he's negotiating—or perhaps even disputing. When local criminals want certain individuals to disappear, Mruthlissk often purchases them, drugs them to make them biddable, and then resells them elsewhere as slaves. If he has such a captive with him, he often claims the person is a sick relative or village elder whom he is escorting to a particular temple to die. Mruthlissk also sells information he's gained elsewhere, sometimes using a peculiarly-knotted thong as a memory aid to record numbers and individual letters of script that spell out names.

Mruthlissk: Male pureblood yuan-ti ranger 5/shadowdancer 1; CR 9; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 4d8 plus 5d8 plus 1d8; hp 45; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +9; Grp +9; Atk +11 melee (1d6+2/18–20, *+2 scimitar*) or +12 ranged (1d8+1/×3, *+1 longbow*); Full Atk +11/+6 melee (1d6+2/18–20, *+2 scimitar*) or +12/+7 ranged (1d8+1/×3, *+1 longbow*); SA spell-like abilities; SQ alternate form, combat style (archery), darkvision 60 ft., detect poison, evasion, favored enemies (humans +4, halflings +2), hide in plain sight, spell resistance 14, uncanny dodge, wild empathy +8; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +12, Will +7; Str 11, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 16. Height 5′ 9″.

Skills and Feats: Balance +4, Bluff +4, Climb +8, Concentration +10, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +4, Hide +17, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +13, Move Silently +12, Perform (dance) +8, Sense Motive +3, Sleight of Hand +4, Spot +14; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Endurance, Improved Initiative, Rapid Shot^{B}, Stealthy, Track.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*animal trance* (DC 15), *cause fear* (DC 14), *charm person* (DC 14), *darkness, entangle* (DC 14). Caster level 4th.

Alternate Form (Sp): Mruthlissk can psionically assume the form of a Tiny to Large viper. This ability is similar to a polymorph spell (caster level 19th), but he does not regain any hit points for changing form, and he can assume only viper forms. He gains the viper's bite attack and poison special attack.

Detect Poison (Sp): Mruthlissk can use *detect poison* as the spell (caster level 6th) at will.

Hide In Plain Sight (Su): Mruthlissk can use the Hide skill even while being observed as long as he is within 10 feet of any shadow except his own.

Ranger Spells Prepared (1; save DC 12 + spell level): 1st—*alarm*. Mruthlissk typically casts *alarm* on the entrance to his own sleeping-place before retiring, but he sometimes prepares *pass without trace* (DC 13) instead for specific missions.

Possessions: +2 scimitar, +1 longbow, 20 arrows, quiver, *bracers of armor +2, dust of disappearance, ring of the ram,* 2 *potions of cure light wounds,* 100 gp.

Description: Mruthlissk looks like a typical young human male with brown hair and dark, riveting eyes. His slender, supple body seems appropriate for a dancer, and his fine-featured face leads some people to think he must have elf blood in his ancestry. He takes clips his fingernails regularly, since they grow quite rapidly. His tongue is long and forked, so he takes care never to show it. Mruthlissk cosmetically disguises the scales on his lower back to look like burn-scarred, not-wholly-healed skin. Bandages artistically decorated with disgusting, oozing liquid keep most folk from wiping the disguise aside and discovering the truth. He usually "wears" his companion Sriss wound around his body, under his clothing.

Sriss: Male Small viper; CR —; Small animal; HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +3; Spd 20 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +0; Grp –6; Atk +4 melee (1d2–2, bite); Full Atk +4 melee (1d2–2, bite); SA poison; SQ link, low-light vision, scent, share spells, tricks (attack, defend, guard, seek); AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 6, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Climb +6, Hide +11, Listen +7, Spot +7, Swim +6; Weapon Finesse.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 10, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

TATHTLASSS

Born and reared in the cellars of a major port by yuan-ti slavers, Tathtlasss has dwelt in cities all her life, hiding among humans. She earned her coins initially by stealing and later by slaying. Tathtlasss loves to kill—humans in particular—and since she learned that some humans would pay to have others slain, she's lived quite well. The secret of her success is twofold—know thy victim before striking, and know thy employer. Well aware that employers sometimes try to silence assassins after their work is done, Tathtlasss always arranges a safe method of payment (preferably in advance) and a means of escape from the area.

Tathtlasss lives in a world of hiding-places, traps, and ready disguises, and she trusts no one—a policy that has prolonged her life more than once. No matter where she is in a city, she's never far from a place where she can hide—even if it's a shielded corner of someone else's roof. She equips all of her hiding places with food, weapons, clothes, and disguise aids, such as masks and cosmetics, to ensure that she can survive for days and slip out unnoticed when the time is right.

When the market for murder is slow, Tathtlasss is happy to make money by means other than killing. Under the name "Tatha," she operates a makeup, tattooing, and bodypainting service in a storefront in the wealthy part of town. She specializes in superb facial makeup and swirling, ornamental body paint designed to distract viewers from body plumpness when skin-revealing gowns are worn. This lucrative business also allows her to peddle scents, drugs, and poisons on the side to a clientele of wealthy but jaded women while learning about the important people of the city. Between her two professions, she's amassed quite a lot of wealth, which she's invested in properties in many other cities.

Tathtlasss has lingered longer than usual in her current city primarily because it offers her a steady supply of arriving outlanders. Thus, when she is between jobs, she can indulge her love of slaying by ambushing lone strangers no one will ever miss.

Another reason she stays is the presence of an old, local wizard who is gradually sinking into his dotage. He mutters his days away over books of magic, shut away in his golem-guarded tower, never noticing that a lithe thief (who can become a serpent when she wants to hide) has found a way over the rooftops into his loftier windows, and thence into his trophy rooms. In these littered, seldom-visited chambers lie many relics of monsters that can be discreetly harvested for sale as arcane material components. Furthermore, a pearly white ioun stone and a crystal ball with detect thoughts are hidden in a little box on an upper shelf. Tathtlasss has not yet taken these items away with her, preferring to sneak in and use them whenever she wishes. No less than three closets in this warren of cluttered rooms offer her the option of locking herself away to use these items, and one has bolts on the inside of the door that she keeps oiled to ensure silent operation.

Tathtlasss has no interest in making enemies of adventurers who might mount a determined campaign to hunt her down. If at all possible, she poses as a human victim of thieves, kidnappers, or slavers should she unexpectedly encounter PCs. Pretending to be bewildered about how she got into the sewer, cellar, or dungeon labyrinth where they found her, she acts frightened but eager to get out.

If PCs do rescue her, she offers them free bodypainting and tattooing at her shop and treats them well if they accept. Therafter, however, she uses the wizard's crystal ball to keep a close watch on their activities, since adventurers have a habit of turning up wealth and items of interest to a thief. Rather than stealing directly from them, however, she tries to ensure that the city authorities take them into custody for some real or suspected crime. Then, while they're occupied with explaining themselves, she swoops down on their loot.

Tathtlasss: Female pureblood yuan-ti rogue 4/assassin 1; CR 8; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 4d8 plus 4d6 plus 1d6; hp 35; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 13, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +7; Grp +7; Atk +9 melee (1d6+2/18–20, *+2 scimitar*) or +11 ranged (1d8/×3, masterwork longbow); Full Atk +9/+4 melee (1d6+2/18–20, *+2 scimitar*) or +11/+6 ranged (1d8/×3, masterwork longbow); SA death attack, sneak attack +3d6, spell-like abilities, spells, trap sense +1; SQ alternate form, darkvision 60 ft., detect poison, evasion, poison use, spell resistance 14, trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +14, Will +8; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 14, Cha 16. Height 5' 7".

Skills and Feats: Concentration +8, Disable Device +10, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +10, Gather Information +5, Hide +15, Knowledge (local) +10, Listen +12, Move Silently +11, Profession (bodypainter) +6, Profession (tattoo artist) +6, Search +8, Spot +12; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Dodge, Mobility, Point Blank Shot, Quick Draw.

Death Attack: If Tathtlasss can study the target creature for 3 rounds and then successfully deliver a sneak attack in the next 3 rounds, she can either kill the victim or paralyze it for 1d6+1 rounds (Fort DC 14 negates either).

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*animal trance* (DC 15), *cause fear* (DC 14), *charm person* (DC 14), *darkness, entangle* (DC 14). Caster level 4th.

***Alternate Form* (Sp)**: Tathtlasss can psionically assume the form of a Tiny to Large viper. This ability is similar to a *polymorph* spell (caster level 19th), but she does not regain any hit points for changing form, and she can assume only viper forms. She gains the viper's bite attack and poison special attack.

***Detect Poison* (Sp)**: Tathtlasss can use *detect poison* as the spell (caster level 6th) at will.

Poison Use: Tathtlasss is trained in the use of poison and never risks accidentally poisoning herself when applying poison to a blade.

Assassin Spells Known (1; save DC 13 + spell level): 1st—*feather fall, true strike.*

Possessions: +2 scimitar, masterwork longbow, *slaying arrow* (+1 humans), 20 arrows, quiver, *bracers of armor +1, gloves of Dexterity +2, cloak of resistance +1, ring of counterspells (lightning bolt)*, 28 gp.

Description: Tathtlasss looks like a lithe, slender human female. Her smooth, dusky skin is a perfect counterpoint for her black hair and dark eyes. The only hints of her serpentine nature are her forked tongue, pointed teeth, and a few scales along the nape of her neck and spine. Though her long hair usually covers these scales, she further conceals them with a henna-dye "tattoo" of ornate scales edged in many monster heads. She reapplies the design every few months using her professional skills and a set of angled mirrors. Should anyone notice and remark on the design, Tathtlasss passes it off as a slave brand burned into her flesh years ago by a cruel slaver who kidnapped her. Fortunately, she claims, her kin hunted him down and slew him before his caravan could reach the rich slave markets he was heading for.

NAGAS

The Scaleless Ones generally regard naga with a mixture of dread and awe. Some humanoids are drawn to serve and worship these serpentine masters of the Art, while others wisely fear the insidious, slithering threat they pose.

Overview

All nagas are seen as potentially dangerous and regarded with suspicion throughout Faerûn, whether their inherent nature is beneficent, neutral, or malign. The truth is more complex and nuanced.

The Mhairshaulkan sarrukh created nagas to serve as loyal guardians, researchers into the arcane arts, and agents of exploration. Over time, the original nagas fragmented into myriad subraces, each with its own abilities. Now, millennia after the sarrukh dispatched their creations to the far corners of Faerûn, nagas can be found almost everywhere, although most still dislike cold climes. Although they continue to follow their ancient drives, the decline of the sarrukh has enabled them to do so in service to their own ends rather than those of their creators.

Nagas are natural, potent spellcasters born with an inherent understanding of the Art. Regardless of their nature and loyalties, all nagas are crafty, cunning, and charismatic enough to dominate lesser races through force of personality alone. Most are naturally curious, loyal to a fault, and unusually skilled at deductive reasoning. Beyond these basic traits, their attitudes and goals differ by subrace as well as by individual.

Dark nagas^{MM} prefer to plot and scheme, forming calculated alliances with other evil creatures so as to gather prey and wealth more efficiently. The serenely wise guardian nagas^{MM} concern themselves primarily with preserving beauty and goodness. Iridescent nagas^{SK} are itinerant wanderers, constantly seeking new discoveries and hidden beauty in the world. Spirit nagas^{MM}, on the other hand, see only evil and ugliness, and they seek to do harm wherever they can. The bad-tempered and mischievous water nagas^{MM} tend to lash out if threatened, but otherwise they prefer to withdraw from the world at large.

Of the minor naga races, banelar nagas^{SK} are the cruelest, most cunning, and most desirous of magic and power. Bone nagas^{SK}, undead creatures consumed with hatred and malice, detest servitude above all else, but they are otherwise akin to the nagas they once were. Ha-nagas^{SK} revel in their own devastating prowess, seeing all other creatures as lesser beings that should bow down before them. Nagahydras^{SK} are fearsome predators that haunt the depths of the darkest forests and prey on lesser races.

Description

A naga has a long, snakelike body covered with glistening scales and a more or less human face. A typical specimen ranges in length from 10 to 20 feet and weighs between 200 and 500 pounds, but nagas 100 feet or more in length (such as the largest ha-nagas) are also known. The eyes of a naga are bright and intelligent, burning with an almost hypnotic light.

Major Naga Subraces

The major subraces are all quite distinctive in appearance, despite their general similarity of form.

DARK NAGA

This creature has a deep purple, eel-like body covered in fine scales. Its tail ends in a barbed stinger, and its head resembles an eel's except that it has a humanlike visage. Their statistics are found on page 191 of the *Monster Manual.*

Guardian Naga

A guardian naga looks like a snake with a beautiful human face. Its body is covered with green-gold scales that exude a sweet, floral scent. A gold frill extends from the top of its head to the tip of its tail. See page 192 of the *Monster Manual* for full details.

Iridescent Naga

This gentle creature gets its name from the fine, mirrorlike scales that cover its body, radiating a scintillating array of colors whenever it moves. Its head is only vaguely human, and it has colorful feathers in lieu of hair. A frill of silver feathers extends from its neck down to its tail. Iridescent naga statistics are given on page 76.

Spirit Naga

Cloaked in the cloying stink of carrion, this creature looks as foul as it smells. The black body of a spirit naga is banded in swaths of bright crimson, and stringy hair hangs limply from its vaguely human head. The *Monster Manual* describes them on page 192.

Water Naga

The water naga is covered with emerald-green scales in reticulated patterns that run the length of its body. Fiery red and orange spines jut out along its spine from the base of its vaguely human head to the tip of its tail. Their statistics can be found on page 192 of the *Monster Manual.*

Minor Naga Subraces

The minor subraces of nagakind are even more bizarre in appearance than the major ones.

Banelar Naga

This foul creature has a dark purple-green, snakelike body that ends in a dull brown tail. A ring of tiny tentacles surrounds its mouth, and a pair of green-white, glistening eyes is set deep into its oversized humanoid head. See page 72 for their statistics.

Bone Naga

Once a naga of a different kind, this undead horror has been reduced to a serpentine skeleton with a bone tail stinger. Its skull is humanlike except for its long fangs and the cold, cruel light that burns within its empty eye sockets. The tempate appears on page 75.

Faerûnian Ha-Naga

This creature's scales have no set color; rather, they take on hues to match their environment. A ha-naga's head is that of a classically beautiful human man or woman. For more information, see page 75.

Nagahydra

A nagahydra is a monstrous, snakelike creature with multiple humanlike heads. Its scales are multihued and arranged in a reticulated pattern, and a thicket of fiery red and orange spines juts from its body along each of its backbones. Their statistics appear on page 77.

Racial History

Nagas were created by the sarrukh in the early days of Mhairshaulk. Like the yuan-ti, the nagas were the products of magical interbreeding that combined the bodies of powerful serpents with the natural intelligence and inquisitiveness of the human mind. The first nagas produced were water nagas, bred specifically to explore Abeir-Toril for their increasingly withdrawn masters. Only beings such as these could explore both on land and below the sea.

Approximately –33,500 DR, while sarrukh-ruled Mhairshaulk slowly declined, the heart of the empire increasingly became the preserve of the yuan-ti. The unexplored territories beyond its periphery, however, attracted the nagas, who made longer and longer forays into the wilderness. By –24,000 DR, when yuan-ti-ruled Mhairshaulk fell, the nagas had almost wholly withdrawn from their ancient homeland and scattered across all of Faerûn.

In the millennia that followed, many nagas became individually powerful in Faerûn, but they never came together to forge a great civilization of their own. Najara, centered on the Serpent Hills and the Forest of Wyrms, is the closest thing to a powerful naga empire that has ever existed on Toril. Nagas have always ruled the Kingdom of Snakes, the bulk of its populace consists of ophidians, and most of the day-to-day governance is conceded to the yuan-ti of the Hss'tafi tribe. Indeed, only the subtle influence of these yuan-ti has enabled Najara to survive as long as it has. The Nagalands, south of the Vilhon Reach, constitute a more typical example of the kind of anarchical, individual-focused society that nagas naturally form on their own.

After the fall of yuan-ti-ruled Mhairshaulk, different naga bloodlines began to favor certain inherent traits more than others, and in time five major naga subraces evolved: dark nagas, guardian nagas, iridescent nagas, spirit nagas, and water nagas. Some dark and spirit nagas sought out ancient rituals of the sarrukh and transformed themselves into beings of immense power known as ha-nagas. A few water nagas sought to reverse the racial fragmentation, but the result was the creation of the creatures now called nagahydras. The minor subraces known as banelar nagas and bone nagas both appeared within the past two millennia. The former resulted from a magical ritual that the followers of Bane employed on water nagas, and the latter were the products of dark naga experimentation in the ebon arts of necromancy.

outlook

Nagas are inherently curious about the world in general and magic in particular. They hold the pursuit of knowledge and understanding above all other goals and the Art above all other forms of study. While they can see the strategic advantages of consulting a large library of wizard spells or entreating a deity for divine support, most nagas see the Art as a natural extension of the mortal form. Thus, they tend to view sorcery as the perfect embodiment of natural magic.

Most nagas view the preservation of cultural achievements as a worthy goal, regardless of the race that developed them. Thus, nagas of all subraces willingly seek that which has been lost and guard the remains of fallen civilizations. Even ha-nagas and spirit nagas, which normally revel in destruction, like to lair amidst the ruins of lost cities or even the remains of temples, castles, or other edifices that they themselves have destroyed.

Most nagas see their own limbless physical form as the philosophical ideal for a true explorer and scholar. They view the use of physical limbs to manipulate the environment as symptomatic of a lesser mind that has been diverted from true understanding. According to some naga philosophies, the lesser races constitute the "limbs" of a metaphysical body in which the naga is the "brain." Thus, the pairing of nagas with lesser servitors constitutes a perfect melding of mind and body.

naga society

Each naga calls members of its own subrace naja'ssara, a nuanced term loosely translated as "embodiments of the ideal." They call members of other naga subraces naja'ssynsa (shadows of the ideal). Young nagas of any kind are known as nagara, although that term has acquired a secondary meaning that encompasses the ruling dark naga caste of Najara. Bone nagas and rarer undead nagas are called naja'se'ssynsa (eternal shadows of the ideal).

Nagas never speak in the first person singular, preferring instead the "royal we." An individual naga of any kind always refers to itself as Ssa'Naja (we the ideal). Members of lesser races are termed dista'ssara, (hands of the embodiment), while more powerful creatures are called senthissa'ssa (teachers worthy of emulating).

social hierarchy

As noted previously, nagas of all kinds are fiercely independent creatures. They have no concept of equal rank and hence no word for "peer." Each naga considers itself perfect and other members of its own subrace as nearly so.

relationships

Although some nagas are perceived as male or female (including, curiously, all naga deities), all are actually hermaphrodites. As such, each naga is capable of both self-impregnation and copulation with another of its subrace to fertilize the eggs of both. Since neither form of reproduction is particularly favored over the other, convenience and individual preference dictate how and when any given naga reproduces. This flexibility also means that the concept of a mate does not have the same importance to a naga as it does to most other creatures.

life cycle

Each naga lays its eggs in its own lair and tends them until they hatch. Young nagas are fed and trained by their parent, and the nagara instinctively work together until they are strong enough to survive on their own. At that point, the parent simply leaves the lair for good and seeks out a new one.

organization

Though nagas have little in the way of social structure, they do understand the concept of the s'agara'ssynsa, or nest. Originally, the s'agara'ssynsa encompassed only eggmates, since nagara of the same hatching must work together to survive until they reach adulthood. Over time, however, this concept has been extended to encompass small groups of allied adult nagas who agree to work together toward a common set of goals. Eventually, such societal evolution may lead to naga tribes, but for now nagas rarely work in groups of more than three or four, and then only for limited periods of time.

Occasionally, a powerful outside influence (such as an individual phaerimm or a group of yuan-ti working in concert) can forge much larger bands of nagas, but such social structures persist only as long as outside pressure is applied to maintain them. The longevity of the Kingdom of Snakes is due in large part to the subtle influence of the Hss'tafi tribe, whose leaders have held the ruling nagas together for centuries. Their technique consists of strictly indoctrinating the ruling class with the concept of the "greater nest" and referring to its members as "nagara." In this way, they continually reinforce the notion that the nagas must continue working together with others of their "nest."

naga characters

The typical naga is a natural master of the Art, exhibiting inherent spellcasting powers equivalent to those of a 7th-level or higher spellcaster. (Banelar nagas are a notable exception to this rule.)

Although nagas can advance by gaining additional Hit Dice, mature individuals who have traveled far and wide can also advance via class levels, although most do not survive long enough to do so. The favored class for such nagas is either sorcerer or bard, and the favored classes for banelar nagas are cleric and wizard.

For the purpose of spellcasting, a naga is considered to have virtual levels at least one spellcasting class that stack with any actual levels it has in the same class. For example, a typical dark naga casts spells as a 7th-level sorcerer, though it has none of the other abilities of such a character (such as the ability to summon a familiar). A dark naga that acquired one sorcerer level would be a dark naga sorcerer 1 who casts spells as an 8th-level sorcerer, though it would function as a 1st-level sorcerer in all other respects, including familiar benefits.

Some nagas can treat spells from the cleric spell list and certain domain spell lists as arcane spells and can choose them as spells known if desired. For such nagas, gaining additional levels in the class it uses for spellcasting also gives it access to higher-level cleric and domain spells. For example, a typical spirit naga casts spells as a 7th-level sorcerer and thus can know 3rd-level cleric spells and 3rd-level spells from the Chaos and Evil domains as arcane spells. If that spirit naga acquires one sorcerer level, it can then cast spells as an 8th-level sorcerer and thus has access to 4th-level cleric and domain spells. Nagas do not receive the granted powers of their domains.

Magic of the Nagas

Nagas are natural spellcasters, and the breadth and depth of their experimentation with the Art rivals that of any other race. Because their ancestors helped the sarrukh establish the foundations of magic in Isstosseffifil, Mhairshaulk, and Okoth, modern-day nagas have a deep understanding of the history of the Art and the context in which magical advances have been made. Because of this natural affinity for research, a naga gains a +4 racial bonus on Spellcraft checks made to develop a new spell. Moreover, a naga does not require access to a well-stocked library to pursue such a project.

Although nagas experiment with and employ all types of spells, they are masters of divination and guile. Thus, they tend to favor spells from the schools of divination, enchantment, and illusion. Dark nagas in particular favor *arcane eye, arcane sight, charm monster, charm person, command, confusion, disguise self, eagle's splendor, hypnotic pattern, detect magic, detect thoughts, fox's cunning, greater mage hand**, *identify, mage hand, misdirection, owl's wisdom, prayer, read magic, scrying, suggestion, vampiric touch, ventriloquism,* and *whispering wind. Razorscales, venomfire,* and other spells developed and used by nagas are detailed in Chapter 11.

Many nagas are skilled in the art of creating magic items. They invariably favor objects that they can employ in their natural forms, so items worn over the eyes (lenses, goggles, and masks), on the head (coronets, diadems, crowns, hats, headbands, helmets, and phylacteries), or around the neck (amulets, brooches, medallions, necklaces, periapts, and scarabs) are common. Banelar nagas also utilize rings, rods, and wands that they can employ with the tentacles that grow around their mouths.

Magic items commonly created and used by nagas include *arms of the naga* (*Savage Species*), *brooches of shielding, elixirs of fire breath, hands of the mage, headbands of intellect, helms of brilliance, helms of darkness**, *helms of telepathy, kiira**, *masks of blood**, *masks of the skull**, *medallions of thought, necklaces of fireballs, necklaces of nature's teeth** (constrictor and viper versions), *periapts of wisdom,* and *phylacteries of faithfulness.* Banelar nagas also favor *python rods, rings of lore**, *rings of wizardry, rods of rulership, rods of spheres**, and *wands of magic missile.* Some items created by nagas, including *circlets of seven serpents,* are detailed in Chapter 10. The art of crafting a *naga crown* (actually a creation of the yuan-ti, see Chapter 10) has been lost, if indeed nagas ever knew it.

*See *Magic of Faerûn.*

Naga Deities

When the sarrukh created the naga race, Mhairshaulk was a monotheistic society that acknowledged and venerated only the World Serpent. All other claimants to the mantle of divinity were viewed as blasphemous heretics. However, the many facets of the World Serpent—and even other gods—intrigued many nagas, since they were by nature more curious than their creators. Some theologians now claim it was the endless questioning of the World Serpent by the naga race that caused the Great Scaled One to fragment into a host of lesser deities, while others insist that the nagas were simply the first to recognize the World Serpent's impending fragmentation. Whatever the cause, sages agree that the breakup of the World Serpent enabled the resulting deities to better address the myriad, contradictory demands of its worshipers.

Of all the emergent aspects of the Great Scaled One, two deities in particular attracted the worship of most nagas: Ssharstrune and Shekinester. The former embodied the principles of curiosity, destruction, and possessiveness that had precipitated the World Serpent's fragmentation. The latter, known as the Naga Queen, became the keeper of the knowledge and wisdom originally held by the World Serpent, preserved within the eternal flame that she guarded.

After the fall of Mhairshaulk, both Ssharstrune and Jazirian, another fragment of the World Serpent, began to court Shekinester. The Naga Queen eventually chose Jazirian and became pregnant by him. Enraged by this decision, Ssharstrune attacked Shekinester, and she was forced to swallow him. In so doing, the Naga Queen took into herself the same destructive element that had fragmented the World Serpent in the first place. As a result, she acquired five guises: the Acquirer, the Empowerer, the Seeker, the Weaver, and the Preserver. This event was accompanied by a fivefold division in the naga race, forming the five major subraces now known as dark nagas, guardian nagas, iridescent nagas, spirit nagas, and water nagas.

Upon giving birth to Parrafaire, the Naga Prince, Shekinester expelled Ssharstrune's remains and instructed her offspring to hide away the destructive force that the corpse embodied forever, so that her fivefold aspect could not actually divide her into five separate goddesses. Parrafaire complied with her wishes, and now both he and his mother are venerated as guardians of the naga race.

An individual naga who worships Shekinester typically embraces one aspect of the goddess wholly but gives homage to all her other guises as well. The Five-Faced Queen does not have an organized church, and she largely eschews clerical support. Embracing the magical heritage that runs in the bloodlines of her followers, Shekinester allows some nagas to access divine powers through arcane spellcasting. See Deities of the Scaled Ones in the Appendix for more information on specific deities.

other Deities venerated by Nagas

The following deities also have significant naga followings.

BANE, THE BLACK LORD

Although Bane is part of the Faerûnian pantheon venerated primarily by humans, many banelar nagas are also drawn to the tyranny of the Black Lord. According to legend, Bane once taught his human followers the rediscovered ritual for transforming water nagas into banelar nagas, thus ensuring himself a loyal following within this minor naga subrace. Many banelar nagas that had strayed to the faiths of Cyric and Iyachtu Xvim during Bane's absence from the pantheon have since returned to the Black Lord's fold, swelling the ranks of his followers once again.

Banelar nagas that ally with priests of Bane are considered mid-level priests in the church hierarchy, with all the attendant privileges and duties stemming from such a ranking. Further information about the Black Lord can be found in *Faiths and Pantheons.*

CYRIC, THE DARK SUN

During the fourteen years that Bane was dead, a large number of banelar nagas forged alliances with the church of Cyric in order to further their own evil ends. Since Bane's return, however, most of them have gone back to their traditional faith. The remaining Cyricist banelar nagas tend to be of neutral evil or chaotic evil alignment, and they are actively hunted by followers of the Black Lord. Further information about the Dark Sun can be found in *Faiths and Pantheons.*

Relations with other Races

Nagas are extremely conscious of their status among the various sentient and magic-wielding races of Faerûn. They view most other creatures as beneath them and in need of leadership, education, or complete domination. This belief leads many dark and spirit nagas to establish small cults of servitors who worship them as divine entities, and many guardian and iridescent nagas to become teachers and guides for those who would benefit from their insight and wisdom. Conversely, many nagas willingly serve beings with potent, internal magic that exceeds their own mastery of the Art, including dragons, phaerimms, sarrukh, sharn, and certain yuan-ti.

Nagas have far less difficulty leading large numbers of lesser creatures than they do interacting with others of their own kind, since subservient creatures do not challenge their sense of individuality. An evil naga mastermind attended by a cult of worshipers perceives itself as effectively alone, with the lesser races acting as tools or physical extensions of its will. Likewise, a good-aligned naga teacher attended by a band of disciples also perceives itself as alone, with the lesser races serving as empty containers in which to store its wisdom. Such narcissistic racial perceptions give rise to a complete intolerance for disloyalty—after all, a creature should be able to direct its own limbs without fearing argument or betrayal.

Naga Equipment

Nagas use little in the way of mundane equipment. A few have armor specially designed for their sinuous bodies, but most shun it because it inhibits their movement. Weapons are useless to nagas, since they have no manipulative appendages.

Naga Encounters

Player characters can encounter individual nagas almost anywhere, often supported by cults or small groups of followers. Both human cities and remote locations can hide naga lairs, though good-aligned nagas often make the locations of their lairs public so that they can direct the activities of their followers openly.

Ready-to-Use Villains and Allies

Nagas often pursue prestige classes of various kinds, particularly those that enhance their spellcasting ability. The naga characters presented below can be woven into adventures or encountered individually.

MAHARISHI, SEER OF PROCALITH

Maharishi lairs amidst the ruins of Procalith at the western end of the Dolphingulf, in the shadow of the Delphin Mountains. Known as the Seer of Procalith, the wise guardian naga has made the study of the sarrukh and the yuan-ti its life's work, focusing especially on their history and magic. Thus, the naga has become known far and wide as a skilled diviner and sage of all things serpentine. Adventurers of all stripes seek out Maharishi before delving into the Black and Mhair Jungles, knowing that the information it can provide may mean the difference between life and death in the heartlands of the yuan-ti. Those who survive such treks often pay the mysterious oracle a second visit upon their return to find out which of the artifacts they have recovered are valuable and which bear fell curses of the yuan-ti.

Maharishi's actual lair has never been found. Those who seek the naga simply camp out for a night in the ruined city, putting to papyrus a summary of their questions or laying out the items they wish to have examined. Thereafter, they rest normally and do not resist scrying attempts. If the Seer of Procalith is willing to grant them an audience, it appears before them.

Maharishi, Seer of Procalith: Guardian naga sorcerer 6/loremaster 9; CR 25; Large aberration; HD 11d8+44 plus 6d4+24 plus 9d4+36; hp 190; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +18; Grp +27; Atk +23 melee (2d6+5 plus poison, bite) or +19 ranged touch (poison, spit); Full Atk +23 melee (2d6+5 plus poison, bite) or +19 ranged touch (poison, spit); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA poison, spells, spit; SQ darkvision 60 ft., greater lore, lore, secrets; AL LG; SV Fort +17, Ref +17, Will +25; Str 21, Dex 14, Con 19, Int 16, Wis 19, Cha 22.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +20, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +10, Hide –2, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (arcana) +29, Knowledge (history) +29, Knowledge (religion) +20, Knowledge (the planes) +15, Listen +13, Sense Motive +19, Spellcraft +17, Spot +13; Alertness, Combat Casting, Craft Wondrous Item, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Extend Spell, Lightning Reflexes, Silent Spell, Skill Focus (Knowledge [arcana]), Skill Focus (Knowledge [history]), Still Spell.

Poison (Ex): Bite or sting, injury or contact, Fortitude DC 19, initial and secondary damage 1d10 Con.

Spells: Maharishi casts spells as a 9th-level sorcerer and can also cast spells from the cleric list and from the Good and Law domains as arcane spells.

Spit (Ex): Maharishi can spit its venom (see Poison, above) up to 30 feet as a standard action. Spitting is a ranged touch attack with no range increment.

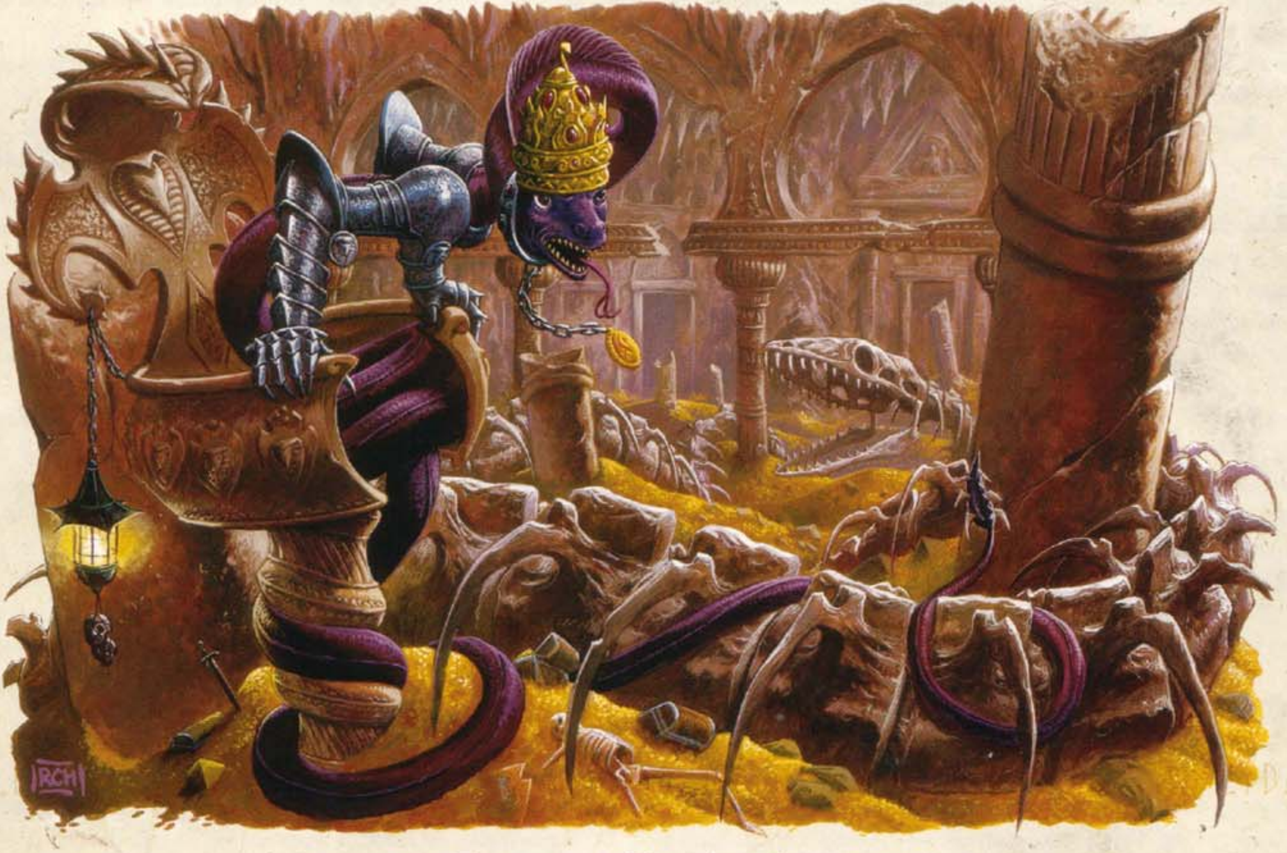
Greater Lore: Maharishi can understand magic items as though with the *identify* spell.

Lore: Maharishi knows legends or information regarding various topics and can retrieve it just as a bard can with bardic knowledge. It has a +16 bonus on its lore check.

Secrets: Maharishi knows the lore of true stamina, secret knowledge of avoidance, weapon trick, dodge trick, and applicable knowledge (Skill Focus [history]).

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/8/8/7/7/7/7/6/6/6; save DC 16 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark, dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, ghost sound, mage hand, open/close, read magic, resistance;* 1st—*disguise self, know protections*, magic missile, shield, true strike;* 2nd—*detect thoughts, eagle's splendor, locate object, protection from arrows, see invisibility;* 3rd—*analyze portal, clairaudience/clairvoyance, nondetection, tongues;* 4th—*confusion, detect scrying, scrying, spell enhancer**; 5th—*break enhancement, contact other plane, dominate person, overland flight;* 6th—*analyze dweomer, legend lore, Tenser's transformation;* 7th—*greater arcane sight, greater teleport, prismatic spray;* 8th—*greater prying eyes, horrid wilting, moment of prescience;* 9th—*foresight, meteor swarm, time stop.*

Languages: Celestial, Common, Tashlutan, Yuan-ti.



The throne room of Ebarnaje and Terpenzi

Illustration by Ralph Horsley

Possessions: Headband of the binder, medallion of mind shielding* (treat as *ring of mind shielding*), *gem of seeing*, *wings of flying*, *ioun stones* (clear spindle, vibrant purple prism, lavender and green ellipsoid), *potion of bull's strength*, 2 *potions of cure light wounds*.

*See *Magic of Faerûn*.

Ebarnaje, King of Najara

Ebarnaje, the reigning King of Snakes, is a powerful dark naga who claimed the unique naga crown known as the *Marlspire of Najara* in the Year of the Ormserpent (1295 DR), after the untimely death of the previous ruler. The serpentine monarch lairs in the Snake Pit of Ss'khanaja, attended by the Guardian of Najara and a half-dozen spirit nagas.

Although Ebarnaje is personally quite powerful, its authority stems primarily from its strength of personality and its ability to inspire the serpentfolk of Najara. The current King of Snakes is patient, but much more ambitious than its immediate predecessors. Ebarnaje backed the formation of the Cult of the Dark Naga (see Najara in Chapter 7) in hopes of adding to the store of spells and magic available to Najara's elite, but it has yet to reveal what it intends to do upon acquiring such an arsenal. The King of Snakes also backs plans to subvert the village of Serpent's Cowl by slow and steady means, and to regain control of the ruined city of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun and reclaim it as Najara's capitol.

Ebarnaje reached its current position by forging alliances with care and by pitting its underlings and rivals against one another. It shows no sign of abandoning such tactics now, even though they might actually hinder the achievement of its goals.

Ebarnaje, King of Najara: Advanced dark naga sorcerer 3/naga overlord 5; CR 19; Huge aberration; HD 24d8+96 plus 3d4+12 plus 5d8+20; hp 265; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 20, touch 9, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +18; Grp +32; Atk +31 melee (2d6+11 plus poison, sting) or +21 ranged touch (poison, spit) or +25 melee (3d8+9/19–20, *+3 unholy bastard sword*); Full Atk +31 melee (2d6+11 plus poison, sting) and +26 melee (1d6+8, bite) or +21 ranged touch (poison, spit) or +25/+20/+15/+10 melee (3d8+9/19–20, *+3 unholy bastard sword*) and +26 melee (2d6+8 plus poison, sting) and +26 melee (1d6+8, bite); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA enslave 2/day, poison, spells, tap slave 1/day; SQ augment followers I, augment followers II, darkvision 60 ft., detect thoughts, guarded thoughts, immunity to poison, resistance to charm; AL LE; SV Fort +16, Ref +15, Will +20; Str 22, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 23.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +20, Concentration +19, Diplomacy +24, Disguise +20, Hide –7, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (Chultan Peninsula history) +10, Knowledge (religion) +11, Knowledge (Western Heartlands history) +17, Listen +18, Sense Motive +16, Spellcraft +20, Spot +18; Ability Focus (poison), Alertness, Barbed Stinger, Combat Casting, Deadly Spittle, Dodge, Eschew Materials, Extend Spell, Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Spell Focus (Enchantment), Spit Venom.

Enslave (Su): Ebarnaje can attempt to enslave any one living creature within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 32 Will save or be affected as though by a *dominate person* spell (caster level 15th). An enslaved creature obeys Ebarnaje's telepathic commands until freed by *remove curse* and can attempt a new Will save every 24 hours to break free. The control is also broken if Ebarnaje dies or travels more than 1 mile from its slave.

Poison (Ex): Bite or spit, injury or contact, Fortitude DC 28 or lapse into a nightmare-haunted sleep for 2d4 minutes.

Spells: Ebarnaje casts spells as a 15th-level sorcerer.

Tap Slave (Su): Once per day, Ebarnaje can leech the lifeforce of any one enslaved follower within 1 mile as if using the *vampiric touch* spell (caster level 5th), except that it need not actually touch the target.

Augment Followers I (Su): The following spells automatically function as if affected by the Extend Spell feat when Ebarnaje casts them: *bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, eagle's splendor, fox's cunning, owl's wisdom*. These spells do not occupy higher spell slots or require additional casting time.

Augment Followers II (Su): The range of the following spells automatically becomes close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels) when Ebarnaje casts them: *bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, eagle's splendor, fox's cunning, owl's wisdom*.

Detect Thoughts (Su): Ebarnaje can continuously use *detect thoughts* as the spell (caster level 9th; Will DC 28 negates). This ability is always active.

Guarded Thoughts (Ex): Ebarnaje is immune to any form of mind reading.

Resistance to *Charm* (Ex): Ebarnaje has a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against all *charm* effects.

Sorcerer Spells Known (12/14/14/13/13/13/13/8; save DC 16 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark, detect magic, ghost sound, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic;* 1st—*alarm, comprehend languages, shield, Tenser's floating disk, true strike;* 2nd—*bull's strength, cat's grace, eagle's splendor, protection from arrows, spider climb;* 3rd—*dispel magic, fireball, lightning bolt, protection from energy;* 4th—*detect scrying, fear, fire shield, stoneskin;* 5th—*contact other plane, dominate person*†, *Mordenkainen's private sanctum, teleport;* 6th—*globe of invulnerability, Tenser's transformation, true seeing;* 7th—*greater scrying, Mordenkainen's sword*.

†Because of Spell Focus (enchantment), the DC for saves against this spell is 17 + spell level.

Possessions: +3 unholy bastard sword, amulet of mighty fists +5, arms of the naga (see *Magic of Faerûn*), *Marlspire of Najara, snakeskin of natural armor +5* (as *amulet of natural armor +5*).

Terpenzi, The Guardian of Najara

The bone ha-naga known as Terpenzi was the founder and the first ruler of Najara, the Kingdom of Snakes. After its death in battle against the Shadowking during the waning days of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun, its remains were converted into a bone naga, and it guarded the abandoned City of Fountains for millennia.

During its long unlife, it gained considerable power as a naga overlord (see Chapter 12: Prestige Classes).

Today, Terpenzi is the sinister Guardian of Najara, enslaved to the will of each successive dark naga king by the *Marlspire of Najara.* The bone ha-naga is utterly loyal to both the realm it founded and the monarch who wears Najara's crown, though it constantly presses against the magical strictures that enforce its loyalty to the leader of the nagara. To that end, Terpenzi engages in decades-long plots to undermine the rule of the nagara without betraying the reigning king. Most of these plots involve inducing adventurous Scaleless Ones to wage daring assaults on the ruling nagara and destroy the *Marlspire of Najara,* an item that they've been led to believe threatens the safety of western Faerûn.

Terpenzi, the Guardian of Najara: Bone Faerûnian ha-naga naga overlord 10; CR 33; Colossal undead (augmented aberration); HD 24d12+264 plus 10d12+110; hp 595; Init +22; Spd 60 ft., fly 120 ft. (perfect); AC 40, touch 16, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +23; Grp +47; Atk +34 melee (4d6+8, coil whip) and +32 melee (2d8+4 plus poison, sting) and +32 melee (4d6+4 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 30 ft./20 ft.; SA charming gaze, constrict 4d6+12, enslave 3/day, poison, spells, tap slave 3/day; SQ augment followers I, augment followers II, augment followers III, chameleon ability, damage reduction 15/epic and 5/bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., flight, immunity to cold, spell resistance 44, telepathy, undead traits; AL LE; SV Fort +24, Ref +29, Will +29; Str 27, Dex 38, Con 32, Int 35, Wis 31, Cha 36. Length 120 ft.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +40, Concentration +38, Diplomacy +48, Disguise +40, Escape Artist +41, Hide +33, Intimidate +47, Knowledge (history) +39, Listen +37, Move Silently +41, Search +39, Sense Motive +37, Spellcraft +39, Spot +37; Combat Casting, Extend Spell, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Improved Spell Capacity, Lightning Reflexes, Maximize Spell, Multiattack, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Spell Focus (Enchantment), Superior Initiative, Weapon Finesse.

Augment Followers I (Su): The following spells automatically function as if affected by the Extend Spell feat when Terpenzi casts them: *bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, eagle's splendor, fox's cunning, owl's wisdom.* These spells do not occupy higher spell slots or require additional casting time.

Augment Followers II (Su): The range of the following spells automatically becomes close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels) when Terpenzi casts them: *bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, eagle's splendor, fox's cunning, owl's wisdom.*

Augment Followers III (Su): The following spells automatically function as if affected by the Extend Spell feat when Terpenzi casts them: *mass bear's endurance, mass bull's strength, mass cat's grace, mass eagle's splendor, mass fox's cunning, mass owl's wisdom.* These spells do not occupy higher spell slots or require additional casting time.

Charming Gaze (Su): Terpenzi's gaze functions like the *mass charm* spell against creatures within 90 feet (Will DC 35 negates).

Constrict (Ex): Terpenzi deals 4d6+12 points of damage with a successful grapple attack against a Huge or smaller opponent.

Enslave (Su): Terpenzi can attempt to enslave any one living creature within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a DC 40 Will save or be affected as though by a *dominate monster* spell (caster level 10th). An enslaved creature obeys Terpenzi's telepathic commands until freed by *remove curse* and can attempt a new Will save every 24 hours to break free. The control is also broken if Terpenzi dies or travels more than 1 mile from its slave.

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude DC 33, initial and secondary damage 1d4 Str; Sting, Fortitude DC 33, initial and secondary damage 2d8 Con.

Spells: Terpenzi can cast spells as a 34st-level sorcerer and can choose spells from the cleric list and from the Chaos and Evil domains. The cleric spells and domain spells are considered arcane spells for him.

Tap Slave (Su): Three times per day, Terpenzi can leech the lifeforce of any one enslaved follower within 1 mile as if using the *vampiric touch* spell (caster level 10th), except that it need not actually touch the target.

Chameleon Ability (Ex): Terpenzi blends in with its surroundings, gaining a +8 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

Flight (Su): Terpenzi can fly as though with the *fly* spell at 120 feet with perfect maneuverability. This ability grants him a +6 circumstance bonus on Move Silently checks when flying.

Telepathy (Su): Terpenzi can communicate telepathically with any creature within 250 feet that has a language.

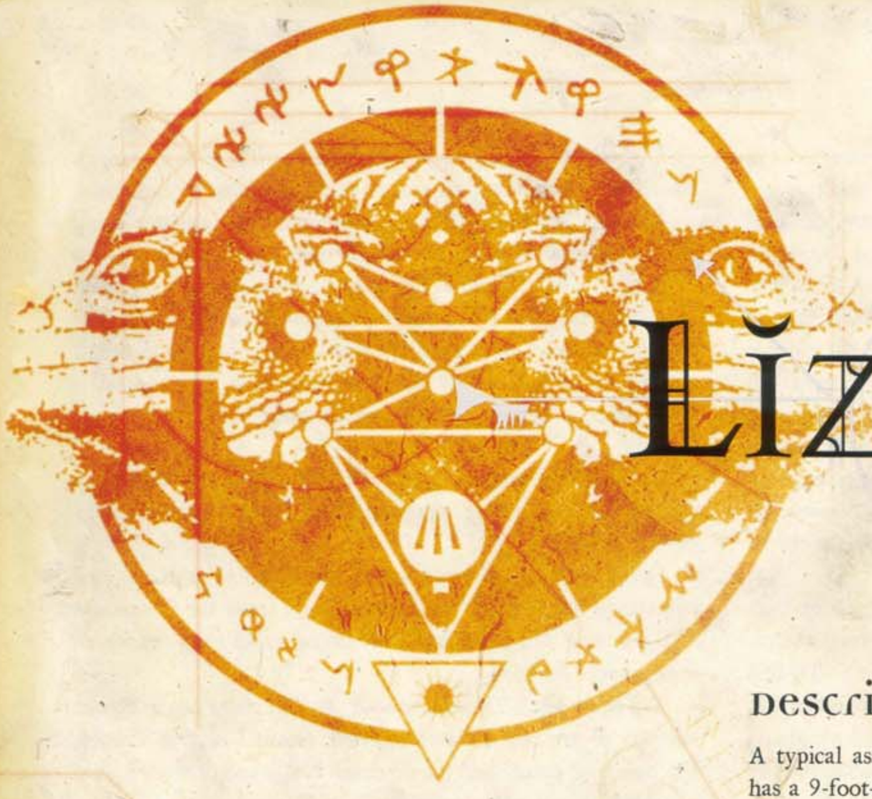
Undead Traits: Terpenzi is immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. It is not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage to its physical ability scores, ability drain, energy drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or death from massive damage. It cannot be raised, and resurrection works only if it is willing. Darkvision 60 ft.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/10/9/9/9/9/8/8/8/8/2; save DC 23 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark, detect magic, ghost sound, light, mage hand, message, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic;* 1st—*alarm, comprehend languages, disguise self, mage armor, magic missile;* 2nd—*eagle's splendor, protection from arrows, spectral hand, Tasha's hideous laughter*†, *touch of idiocy*†; 3rd—*fireball, lightning bolt, rage*†, *suggestion*†; 4th—*crushing despair*†, *explosive cascade**, *fire shield, iron bones**; 5th—*baleful polymorph*†, *dominate person*†, *nightmare, wall of force;* 6th—*chain lightning, greater heroism*†, *true seeing;* 7th—*greater arcane sight, insanity, Mordenkainen's sword;* 8th—*mass charm monster*†, *demand*†, *polar ray;* 9th—*meteor swarm, prismatic sphere, wish.*

†Because of Spell Focus (enchantment), the DC for saves against these spells is 24 + spell level.

*Possessions: Amulet of mighty fists +5, helm of darkness**.

*See *Magic of Faerûn.*



LIZARDS

Like the serpentfolk, the lizard races are diverse and have little in common except for their barbaric nature and their heritage. Most were created by the sarrukh tens of thousands of years ago, either as servants or as agents capable of advancing whatever agenda they had at the time. Although the sarrukh created hundreds, if not thousands, of other lizard creatures during the heyday of their empires, most were killed by competing races or proved incapable of surviving in the wilderness. Those that still exist today are hardy, determined, and hostile.

Asabis

Asabis are desert-dwelling, reptilian humanoids. Native to the Isstosseffifil Empire, which stood where the Anauroch desert is now, asabis are still primarily found within and beneath the Great Desert. The name asabi was given to these creatures by the Bedine tribes. In earlier times, they were known as the laerti—a name given to them by the Netherese.

Asabis are warlike creatures with a love of battle unequalled by most other races. They often form mercenary bands or are enlisted into the service of more powerful evil creatures.

Overview

The asabi race encompasses two separate subraces. The first and most common is the standard asabi; the second is the stingtail. Both are described in *Monsters of Faerûn*.

Description

A typical asabi of either subrace stands about 7 feet tall and has a 9-foot-long tail that stabilizes it when it stands. It walks upright but hunched over, with a gait that wobbles to and fro. An asabi's limbs protrude from its sinuous body at odd angles, and it moves with quick, awkward-looking gestures. Its narrow skull features a sloping forehead that ends in protruding brows. Its pebbly skin varies in color from brown to gray and is lighter on its belly.

STANDARD ASABI

Standard asabis are primarily warriors. They enjoy fighting, and they are accustomed to organizing themselves in disciplined ranks. Asabis are happy to fight for their masters (if enslaved) or for whoever pays them the most gold.

STINGTAIL

Stingtails also take naturally to battle. They are generally more powerful than standard asabis, but they also behave more chaotically on the battlefield.

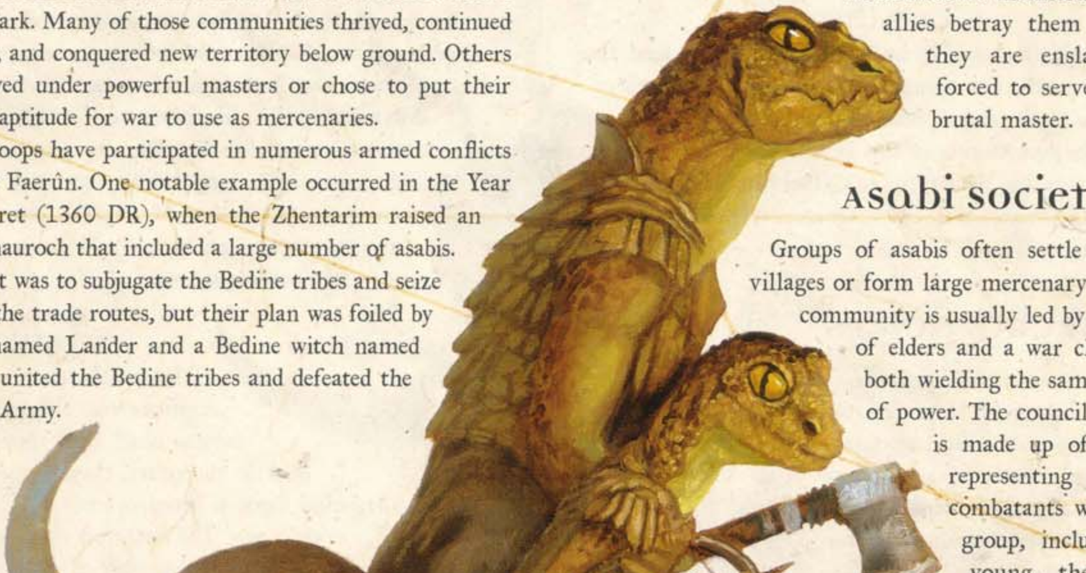
Racial History

Like many of the scaly races, asabis were created by the sarrukh before the fall of their empires. The sarrukh designed asabis specifically to fight their battles. In the millennia since their creation, these warlike creatures have not changed their focus at all, nor have they spread throughout Faerûn as many other species have done.

Many asabis who were originally loyal to the sarrukh remained so when their empires crashed down around them. Today, the offspring of those loyal asabis continue to live in what remains of Isstosseffifil—namely, a single subterranean stronghold in the catacombs of ruined Oreme. The sixty ancient sarrukh liches who dwell in the Crypt of Dreaming Lizards nominally rule this place, though only one of them is awake at any given time. The one currently in charge allows the asabis to govern themselves, considering them trustworthy since they have chosen to remain of their own volition. These asabis maintain a powerful defense against potential intruders. The asabis of Oreme believe it is their duty to protect the lich kings and go to war for them should the need arise.

Other asabis that were once loyal to the sarrukh fled underground when the three empires were destroyed. The harsh life there caused disagreements that fragmented the group, and eventually several different asabi clans carved out homes within the Underdark. Many of those communities thrived, continued to multiply, and conquered new territory below ground. Others were enslaved under powerful masters or chose to put their instinctual aptitude for war to use as mercenaries.

Asabi troops have participated in numerous armed conflicts throughout Faerûn. One notable example occurred in the Year of the Turret (1360 DR), when the Zhentarim raised an army in Anauroch that included a large number of asabis. Their intent was to subjugate the Bedine tribes and seize control of the trade routes, but their plan was foiled by a Harper named Lander and a Bedine witch named Ruha, who united the Bedine tribes and defeated the Zhentarim Army.



Asabi

Illustration by Rick Sardinha

A large group of asabis has, until recently, been enslaved by the phaerimms. These mindslaves, as they were called, were completely under the control of their masters, who often sent them against the asabis loyal to the liches of Oreme. Upon the defeat of the phaerimms by the shades of Evereska, thousands of asabis that had once been utterly dominated became free to pursue work as mercenaries. For reasons unknown, a large group of them have recently banded together and are now trekking toward the frozen sea.

outlook

Asabis view warfare as a game, and they delight in slaying enemy creatures. They understand that death is the eventual outcome of a life devoted to warfare, but they believe that dying on the battlefield is the most glorious achievement to which an individual can aspire. Such a death ensures the asabi a place in the palace of her gods.

While asabis delight in warfare, they are not hateful opponents. They know that their craft results in their own deaths as well as the deaths of their enemies, and they accept this outcome as part of the natural life cycle. When alliances shift and old enemies become new allies, they greet their former foes with open arms and march into battle side by side. Asabis make lifetime enemies only when allies betray them or when they are enslaved and forced to serve under a brutal master.

asabi society

Groups of asabis often settle in small villages or form large mercenary bands. A community is usually led by a council of elders and a war chief, with both wielding the same amount of power. The council of elders is made up of laborers representing the noncombatants within the group, including the young, the elderly, and parents who are currently raising young. The war chief rises to power by forging alliances with the warriors of the community and then taking command. Most disagreements that arise between the two centers of power are settled peacefully. Should an impasse occur, the issue is brought before the community, which decides the matter by majority vote.

The asabis of Oreme handle disagreements in a slightly different way. The sarrukh lich that happens to be awake at the time moderates any disputes that cannot be solved between the council of elders and the war chief. The liches prefer to deal with standard asabis rather than the stingtails because the former tend to be more intelligent.

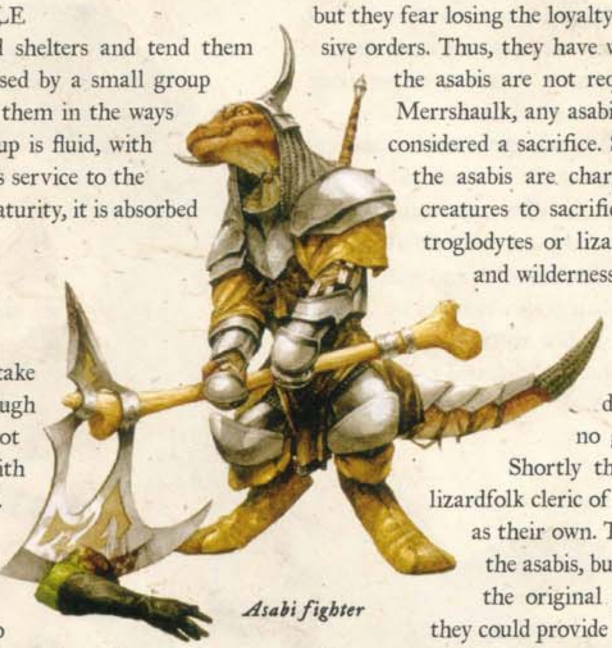
RELATIONSHIPS

Stingtails and standard asabis coexist within the same communities, although a typical settlement has a larger number of one type than the other. The two subraces are usually free to intermingle and reproduce with one another. Each offspring of a mixed pair has an equal chance to be a member of either subrace.

In most cases, no social stigma is attached to the minority subrace in an asabi community. Despite the relative equity between the subraces, however, stingtail settlements tend to be less orderly than standard asabi communities, and their leaders rule by emotions rather than reason. Stingtails are more commonly found in highly aggressive warbands or groups intended for front-line action, such as those that patrol the entrance to the Crypt of the Dreaming Lizards in Oreme.

Life Cycle

Female asabis lay eggs in protected shelters and tend them until they hatch. The young are raised by a small group of asabis of both genders, who train them in the ways of war. The composition of this group is fluid, with adult asabis taking their turns at this service to the community. Once an asabi reaches maturity, it is absorbed into the fighting force.



Asabi fighter

Illustration by Jeremy Jarvis

Asabi Characters

Most asabi characters prefer to take levels of fighter or barbarian, though rangers, rogues, and sorcerers are not uncommon. Asabis who travel with other races often become sell-swords.

Some standard asabis are willing to enter human civilizations and learn about human and humanoid cultures, and many of those who do eventually overcome their evil natures. Stingtails, however, are likely to remain evil and barbaric wherever they serve. Members of this subrace are usually employed exclusively as mercenaries, and they almost never transcend that function within the groups they join.

Magic of the Asabis

Asabis use very little magic and few magic items. Most spellcasting asabis are either clerics or sorcerers. The latter are normally viewed as assets on the battlefield, although they are otherwise distrusted by the majority of their fellows. Clerics are the spiritual leaders and healers of asabi communities, and as such, they are usually considered too valuable to risk on the battlefield. Aside from the adults who tend the young, clerics are the only able-bodied members of an asabi community exempted from war.

Asabi have developed no spells or magic items unique to their race.

Deities of the Asabis

Different asabi communities worship different deities. Most venerate fragments of the World Serpent, but Semuanya actually has the largest number of asabi followers.

Merrshaulk

The asabis of Oreme, in service to the same sarrukh liches that once controlled the Isstosseffifil Empire, still cling to the ancient traditions and worship Merrshaulk, an older aspect of Sseth. They are willing to worship the deity of their creators simply out of loyalty to that race.

Worshipers of Merrshaulk must perform sacrifices regularly. The lich kings would prefer to sacrifice asabis to fulfill this requirement, since no other sacrifices are handy or convenient, but they fear losing the loyalty of their protectors through abusive orders. Thus, they have worked out a compromise. While the asabis are not required to sacrifice themselves to Merrshaulk, any asabi killed while defending Oreme is considered a sacrifice. Should peace reign for too long, the asabis are charged with capturing other scaly creatures to sacrifice. Most often, they bring back troglodytes or lizardfolk from the nearby caverns and wilderness areas.

Semuan-ya

The asabis that escaped the domineering phaerimms had no god until after they were freed. Shortly thereafter, they happened upon a lizardfolk cleric of Semuanya and adopted this deity as their own. The lizardfolk cleric has since left the asabis, but a number of the stingtails from the original group took cleric levels so that they could provide spiritual leadership for the group. These clerics are the true source of power in the community, since this generation has had no exposure to other asabis.

Relations with Other Races

Asabis are accustomed to serving other races, either as slaves or as employed mercenaries. Thus, they tend to treat all intelligent creatures that have not been identified as enemies with respect.

Throughout Anauroch, large numbers of asabis have been forced into slavery by groups such as the phaerimms and the beholders of Xun'Qoroth. Enslaved groups serve faithfully if their masters treat them well. If they are tortured, overworked, or otherwise abused, however, they plot not only their own escape, but also the downfall of their masters. Many a cruel warlord who put a group of asabis to work has been surprised by a knife in the back from one of his "faithful" slaves.

Asabi Equipment

Asabis prefer steel weapons and armor over magic items of almost any sort. Most have the ability to forge metal, though many tribes do not have the resources to do so and must rely on plunder for such supplies.

Firenewts

Firenewts live in hot spots, primarily volcanic regions and deserts. These bipedal monstrous humanoids are as warlike as the asabis, but not as loyal.

Overview

Though they are distantly related to the lizardfolk, firenewts are unlike many of the other scaly races because they were not created by the sarrukh. Some sages have suggested that a few lizardfolk wandered into the Firelands (the Underdark region that lies below the Jungles of Chult) and slowly evolved into firenewts, while others believe that these creatures were the result of magical experimentation.

Description

A firenewt resembles a bipedal lizard with a long tail. Its hands are clawed, and its reversed knees give it an exceptional capacity for running and jumping. Its skin is a blotchy sepia color that is darkest along the spine, fading to near-white on the belly. Its lizardlike face is smooth and unremarkable save for its large, inky-black eyes.

Firenewt warriors wear armor and usually fight with swords or other martial weapons. They prefer mounted combat, and most train giant striders as mounts. Statistics for both firenews and giant striders appear in *Monsters of Faerûn.*

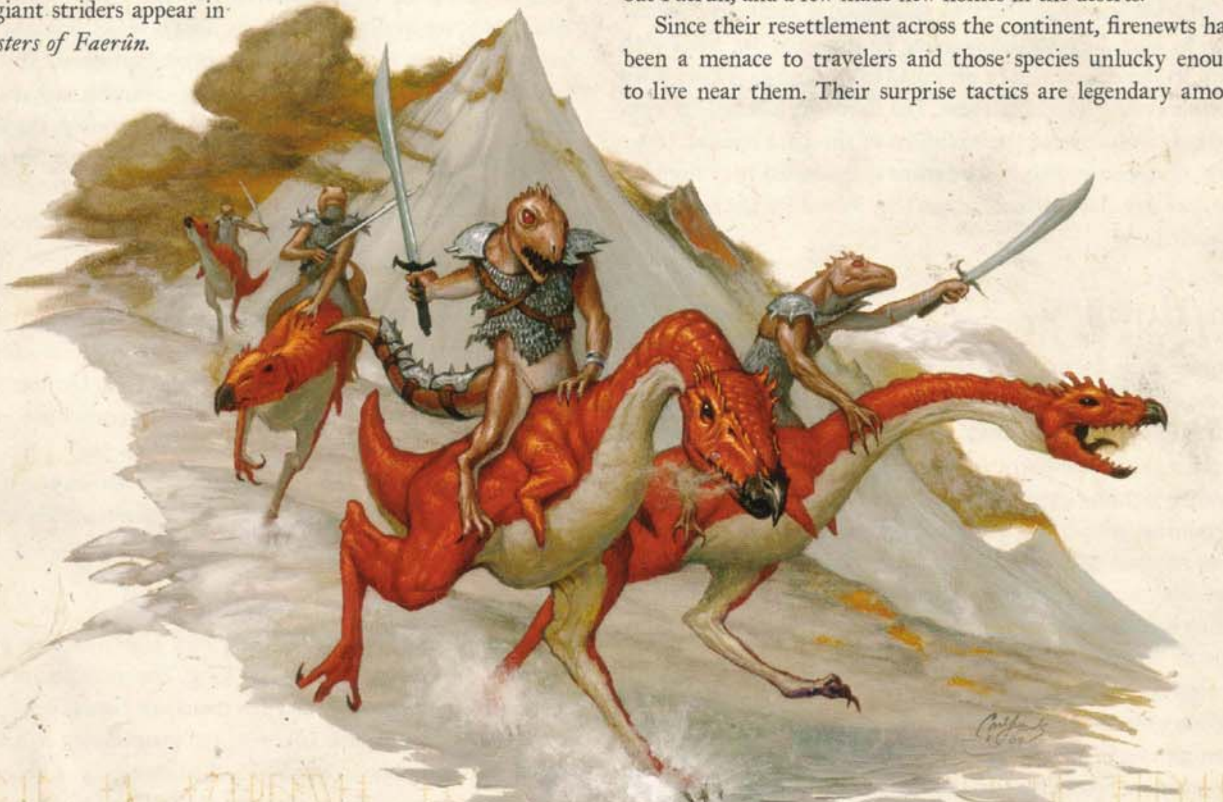
Racial History

Whatever the circumstances of their creation, firenewts originated in the Firelands more than 15,000 years ago. Over time, firenewt raiding parties pushed up into the Peaks of Flame via lava tubes that connected the Burning Rift with the volcanoes above. From there, they spread into the surrounding jungles. Had it not been for the intervention of the yuan-ti, firenewts would probably never have roamed beyond Chult.

In the early days of the Serpentes Empire, the yuan-ti discovered the firenewts. Recognizing their aptitude for combat, the yuan-ti immediately enlisted the aid of their new acquaintances on the field of battle. The firenewts utilized a "hammer-and-anvil" tactic that involved placing a visible unit directly ahead of their enemies and a larger unit just out of view. Once their enemies drew close to the smaller, visible unit, the larger one struck from the sides with melee and breath weapons. Meanwhile, the smaller unit peppered the foe with arrows. This tactic, heretofore unseen in Faerûn, proved remarkably effective against enemy skirmish units.

By the time Serpentes fell, firenewts had spread throughout Faerûn. The great armies of the empire disbanded, leaving isolated colonies of firenewts all over the continent. Although they could have journeyed back to the Peaks of Flame, most of the firenewts were one or two generations removed from those who had quit their ancestral homeland to fight for the serpentfolk. A few made the return trek, but most settled in other volcanic peaks throughout Faerûn, and a few made new homes in the deserts.

Since their resettlement across the continent, firenewts have been a menace to travelers and those species unlucky enough to live near them. Their surprise tactics are legendary among



Firenewts on giant striders

their enemies, but these techniques still remain effective, since their enemies don't know where a surprise attack might originate. Since most firenewts live in mountain peaks, they tend to concentrate their raids against other groups of firenewts as well as other humanoids, such as goblins, orcs, and other mountain-dwelling creatures. Firenewts are a constant source of harassment to the Bedine tribes of the Anauroch desert, and recently the Bedines have devoted enormous resources to seeking out firenewt settlements and destroying them.

THE LEGEND OF INFERNO

Traditionally, firenewts use the giant striders native to the Flame Vault on Tuern as mounts. How they acquired such mounts, however, is a matter of some speculation, since no firenewt has ever actually visited this location.

According to legend, a red dragon of the Starmounts by the name of Inferno once sought a small cadre of fire-based creatures to serve him. Seeing the firenewts of the Peaks of Flame during one of his forays and deciding that they were well qualified to be his underlings, he approached them with a proposal: In exchange for the service of a large band of firenewts, he would provide the colony with an immense pile of gold that the residents could use to recast their statue of Kossuth. The firenewts, who had seen mounted knights and recognized the value of mounts in combat, made a counterproposal. If the dragon could find a creature that the firenewts could ride and breed, they would give him fifty of their warriors.

Inferno agreed and left to seek suitable creatures. Several months later, he returned carrying an immense bag filled with giant strider eggs, which he presented to the firenewts along with instructions for hatching them. The firenewts hatched the eggs and quickly discovered the usefulness of the giant striders. In return, they honored their agreement and selected fifty firenewt warriors to follow Inferno, whom they served for the remainder of their lives.

outlook

Despite their society's apparent orderliness, firenewts are extreme sadists. They delight in the torture of virtually every creature, especially sentient ones such as humans and other humanoids. Firenewts often become enemies or rivals of one another, fighting over assets, social standing, or mates. Murder is common within any given tribe, though fear of retribution from the slain firenewt's family, the clerics, or even the overlord prevents numerous killings. The most expedient way of eliminating a rival is simply not to aid him during a battle, allowing him to be overwhelmed by opponents. When such a solution is not feasible, simply slaying the rival and hiding or destroying his body is the next most common means of elimination. Though everyone knows the missing firenewt's probably fate, the standard assumption is that he simply wandered elsewhere and failed to return.

firenewt society

Firenewt tribes living in close proximity to one another are almost never on friendly terms. At the best of times, they ignore each other, and at the worst they fight vicious wars. In fact, firenewts are more likely to be at war with their own kind than they are with other hated races. Whether or not a war has been declared, the greatest honor a firenewt raiding party can achieve is to find the hatching chambers of a rival tribe and destroy its eggs.

A typical firenewt community is ruled by a single overlord—typically the most charismatic individual in the tribe. The overlord's primary function is to plan raids, assign firenewt warriors to various trade routes, and ensure that his subjects are properly trained and combat-ready. Although firenewts fight constantly if given the chance, only the overlord actually has the power to declare war upon enemies. In many cases, he may choose to harass enemies with quick raids or other actions that require fewer resources than an all-out war.

While the overlord makes the major decisions for a firenewt tribe, clerics of Kossuth oversee the day-to-day functions. These spiritual leaders decide which of their captive humans or humanoids will become meals, attend to the welfare of the tribe, and offer healing as needed.

Firenewts prefer to dine on humanoids of almost any kind. They can survive on the meat of herd animals, wild beasts, or even rodents, but they resort to such fare only when they are completely out of their preferred food. If there are multiple humanoids are available, firenewts always select humans first, followed by elves, dwarves, and then other humanoids. Firenewt tradition holds that brutally torturing creatures before death makes them tastier. Once the meat has been cooked, the clerics eat the juiciest parts, then distribute the rest among the other members of the tribe.

Societal laws vary from tribe to tribe. The most commonly addressed offenses are murder and the theft of food. While the overlord can step in and judge such matters if desired, the tribal clerics handle most of the criminal proceedings. Death is the most common penalty for those found guilty of offenses. Such killings tend to be even more brutal than the torture of humanoids slated for meals. A condemned firenewt is tortured for a minimum of three days. After various body parts have been removed, stabbed, or sliced open, the firenewt is treated with sarsson, an herb that giant striders find irresistible, and fed alive to his own mount.

RELATIONSHIPS

Firenewts take mates within their own tribes as they please, but such relationships rarely last long. The ambition of these creatures and their propensity for treachery far outweigh their loyalty to any individual. Likewise, the membership of an individual warband always remains fluid, allowing for a change of venue when disagreements threaten the stability of a group.

Life Cycle

The propagation of the firenewt race is both difficult and treacherous. After a female has produced a clutch, her eggs are taken to a heavily guarded hatching ground. There, they are placed near lava vents or other sources of heat to ensure that they remain warm. Once an egg begins to hatch, the baby firenewt must tear free within 1 minute or it is deemed too weak to survive. Such a failure to hatch is viewed as a sign that Kossuth is displeased with the tribe, so the attending cleric sacrifices the hapless young firenewt to the god. Such killings are rare, but clerics actually engineer hatching failures on occasion to end the bloodlines of their enemies.

Magic of the Firenewts

As a race, firenewts have no particular talent for arcane magic, so they almost never become wizards or sorcerers. Because they are devout followers of the god Kossuth, however, clerics are an important element of their society. Firenewts rarely create new magic items, although their clerics do have some spells that are unique (see *erupt, lava missile,* and *lava splash* in Chapter 11).

Deities of the Firenewts

The fact that firenewts worship Kossuth instead of some aspect of the World Serpent provides further support for the theory that they were not created by the sarrukh. In fact, the firenewts are among the oldest and most faithful devotees of the Flamelord. Though cults of Kossuth are plentiful in Faerûn, the god truly seems to favor the firenewts. Their clerics teach that Kossuth imbued firenewts with flame when he freed them from the dominion of the World Serpent in the depths of the Burning Rift.

During the Time of Troubles, Kossuth appeared in the Burning Rift beneath the Peaks of Flame and chose a firenewt blackguard named Chassan, overlord of a local tribe, as his avatar. Kossuth/Chassan led the firenewts into a brutal war with the pterafolk of the Chultengar, and the conflict lasted until the Avatar Crisis had ended. Kossuth returned to the planes, leaving the charred corpse of Chassan in his wake, but the god later rewarded Chassan's loyalty by allowing him to return to his tribe as a deathflame (a version of a death knight; see Chassan, below). Chassan, who still leads the Ack'ta tribe by the Flamelord's decree, is one of the few firenewt overlords who also holds sway over the clerics of Kossuth.

Firenewts follow most of the traditions practiced by Kossuth's followers elsewhere in Faerûn. They believe that their souls are tempered by fire, that fire is the cleansing force of the multiverse, and that only the strongest survive the flame. Like other followers of Kossuth, firenewts test themselves with pain, but since flame is a part of their beings, they must choose other forms of pain with which to test their mettle. Thus, firenewts often test the worthiness of their young by submerging them in cold water for as close to a full minute as possible. Those who endure an entire minute of submersion without crying out are deemed worthy to enter the clergy of Kossuth. Those who endure less than half a minute are sacrificed to Kossuth, and the rest become warriors in the service of the overlord.

Unlike most of Kossuth's faithful, firenewts do not divide their clergy between the tendrils and burning braziers. Instead, one single group called the Chalices of Brass is entrusted with tending to the needs of the firenewts and leading them in faith. These priests are responsible for torturing and preparing food for the tribe, ensuring that the eggs are properly hatched, and leading the firenewts in prayer and sacrifice.

Each firenewt tribe has a golden idol in the shape of Kossuth. Strangely, while most believe that Kossuth is a firenewt made of living flame, the golden idol always resembles a great lizard. (The fact that the firenewts were the last to look upon the god's form during the Time of Troubles suggests that he might in fact normally assume this shape.) The golden idols of Kossuth vary in size from one tribe to the next. In general, the overlord evenly distributes the gold acquired from raiding among the members of the tribe, although the clerics are normally given the largest portion. Once they have acquired a large enough supply, they melt it down and reforge it into a larger idol of Kossuth.

Fiewnewts also play a role in the greater church of Kossuth. Several hundred years ago, three prominent firenewt mercenary bands approached the human-led branch of the church to offer their services. The Church of Kossuth accepted their help, using them as temple guards as well as escorts for their traveling clergy. This arrangement continued until the firenewts were indoctrinated into the religion as guardians and living examples of Kossuth's mastery over fire. At that point, they became a much more important aspect of the church. Now a typical temple of Kossuth is protected by more than one hundred firenewts and roughly half that number of giant striders. Some of these firenewts are bred in the church, and others are recruited from the outside. Firenewts wishing to leave may do so freely at any time.

Firenewt Characters

Firenewts are not often found living among other races, and they are almost always hostile when interactions do occur. Should an entire firenewt tribe be slaughtered, the survivors may join local mercenary groups in the region, since they are not normally welcome among other tribes. Given a choice, such firenewts typically join evil groups that raid civilized areas.

Rarer even than survivors of lost tribes are outcasts that have turned their backs on Kossuth and firenewt society and lived to tell the tale. These rare and unique firenewts are normally good or neutral, and some of them even form alliances with good creatures. In fact, rumor has it that several firenewts turned their backs on the tribes in the Peaks of Flame and were subsequently taken in by a couatl.

Most firenewts choose the path of the fighter, but a few of the bravest and healthiest become clerics.

Relations with Other Races

Firenewts view other creatures as little more than food, and they are notoriously sadistic and cruel. Firenewt war parties frequently ambush travelers and disable enemy mounts to slow and confuse their foes, then mount a surprise attack. After winning the battle, firenewts often prolong the thrill of the hunt by of allowing some of their captives to escape, then tracking them down and recapturing them. The firenewts' mounts play a key role in such recaptures, since giant striders can track prey by scent and identify places where their quarry has been for up to three days after it has left.

Firenewt Equipment

Regardless of their location in Faerûn, most firenewt tribes keep flightless birds known as giant striders (*Monsters of Faerûn*, page 51) that serve as their mounts. Giant strider eggs are hatched at the same locations as the firenewt young, although they require even more heat than the firenewt eggs. Upon hatching, each giant strider bonds with a firenewt, becoming its mount and friend until death. The firenewt in turn raises and trains the creature and takes full responsibility for its welfare. The giant strider continues to serve its master even after death, providing food, bones from which tools can be fashioned, and hide for leathermaking.

Khaastas

Sometimes mistaken for powerful lizardfolk, khaastas are extraplanar creatures native to the Abyss. On their home plane and the Barrens of Doom and Despair (where many have migrated), khaastas are mercenaries and fighters who impose their will on others by force of arms. In Abeir-Toril, however, they take a much more cautious approach, staying on the outskirts of society and interacting with the natives only when they need to acquire specific information.

Overview

The khaastas are nomadic creatures by nature. Like many of the other lizard races, they were bred for war and have an unusual talent for waging it. When not doing battle with their own enemies, they are happy to fight on behalf of anyone else willing to hire their services.

Description

Though physically similar to a lizardfolk, a khaasta appears considerably more imposing. Its scales are small, and each individual sports a colorful, flaring crest that is unique in color and shape. Its long powerful tail is used for balance rather than combat. Khaasta statistics appear in the *Fiend Folio.*

Racial History

Sometime in the distant past, the demon prince Demogorgon created the khaastas as servitors—specifically, to serve as warriors in his armies. As the demon lord's power increased, scores of demons joined his army, and the best and brightest of them quickly rose to leadership positions. These demonic generals found the khaastas difficult to command, and in many cases, not as effective in battle as true demons. When they complained to Demogorgon, he pondered the khaastas' thousands of years of loyal service and, in a brief moment of generosity, decided to free them.

The khaastas wasted no time establishing alliances with other demonic powers. They offered to help defend the domains of several demon lords in return for permission to hunt there, and most of those they approached found wisdom in such an arrangement. Such deals forged close relationships between the demons and the khaastas, and eventually both sides agreed to help one another in case of attack. Over time, the khaastas became particularly friendly with Sess'innek, a demon lord who sought the mantle of divinity.

When the sarrukh who survived the fall of the Okothian Empire sought allies in the Abyss, their eyes fell upon the khaastas. Erroneously assuming that these creatures were no more powerful than the lizardfolk they had created in Faerûn, the sarrukh immediately tried to enslave them. Not only did their efforts fail, but the attempt offended the khaastas to such a degree that they immediately declared war on the sarrukh.

The sarrukh called on what few reinforcements they could muster from Faerûn, including an army of lizardfolk led by yuan-ti masters, and war was joined. Not understanding that the Okothian sarrukh were actually refugees from Faerûn, the khaastas hatched a plan to corrupt what they believed to be their enemies' base of power in that world. They petitioned Sess'innek for aid, and he sent demons to take control of the lizardfolk tribes throughout Faerûn that the khaastas believed were supporting the sarrukh invasion. Though this demonic incursion had no effect on the war between the sarrukh and the khaastas, the demons did stay long enough to breed extensively with the lizardfolk, giving rise to the half-fiendish lizardfolk known as the lizard kings (see Lizard Kings, below).

The war dragged on for centuries, often spilling out into some of the outlying planes. Although it had long since become a war of attrition for both sides, momentum finally built in favor of the khaastas under a ruler called Maadar'il. A brilliant tactician whose family had been slaughtered by the sarrukh, Maadar'il proved himself capable of uniting several khaasta factions against the sarrukh. At last, he led his forces to victory, crushing the sarrukh's remaining yuan-ti and lizardfolk allies in the process. The defeated sarrukh returned to Okoth.

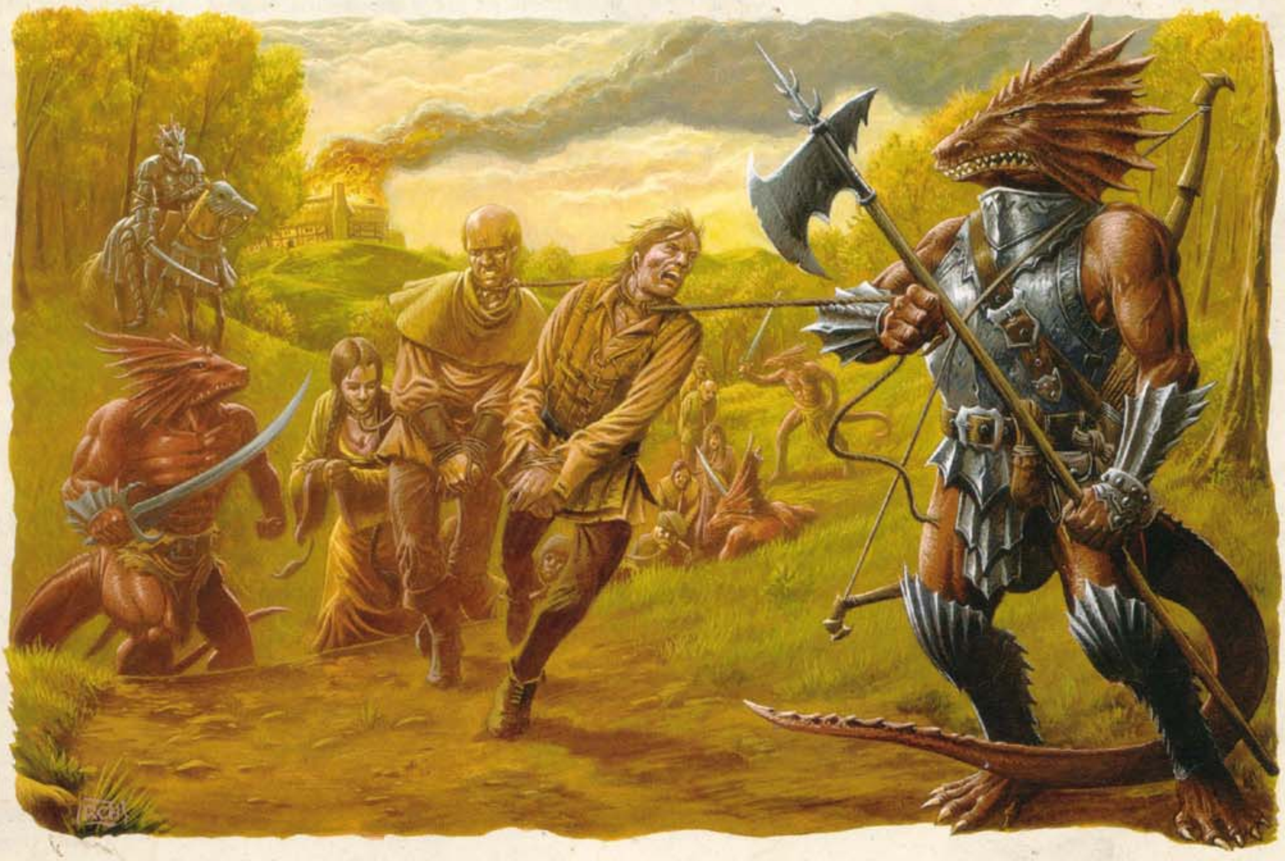
Despite their victory, the khaastas had come to hate the sarrukh with a vengeance for killing so many of their kind. Upon following their fleeing enemies to Faerûn to complete their destruction, they learned that the race was nearly extinct on its home world. Unable to locate their quarry, they returned to the Abyss, where Maadar'il decreed that the war would not be truly won until the last of the sarrukh had been destroyed. To that end, he sent out khaasta scouts to gather information about the sarrukh. They returned with news of a few areas where the sarrukh had existed thousands of years ago. Maadar'il ordered the khaasta armies to invade those areas and destroy any sarrukh they found there, but most of these forces returned with neither news nor any trail to follow.

At last, Maadar'il decided to scale back the number of khaastas he committed to Faerûn and send the more civilized and intelligent members of their race to gather information instead. Several small groups of khaastas traveled to numerous points throughout Faerûn, eventually unearthing a trail that led to their sworn enemies. Raids followed, and though the sarrukh managed to defend their strongholds in Faerûn, they grew worried enough to strike a deal with Set. In exchange for help against the khaastas, they agreed to help him bind Sseth, the aspect of the World Serpent that they worshiped. Set created the wereserpents as a symbol of this pact, and he also managed to secure some werecrocodiles from his ally Sebek to send against the khaastas. This aid prevented the khaastas from inflicting heavy casualties upon the sarrukh, but the attackers were forced to withdraw from many of the locations in Okoth to the underground crypt of Sar'Rukoth. In this stronghold, they were protected not only by their minions, but also by miles of subterranean tunnels. Although the khaastas continued to send out raiding parties, they no longer knew where the sarrukh were hiding, so they began making random strikes throughout the area in hopes of uncovering them. In the meantime, the Okothian sarrukh's betrayal of Sseth made enemies of the yuan-ti and sarrukh of Serpentes, who chose to remain loyal to their god.

The sarrukh struck back at the khaastas by using *polymorph* to turn a yuan-ti assassin into a khaasta and sending him to the Barrens of Doom and Despair. This agent infiltrated Maadar'il's camp and slew him by slipping poison into his food. The khaastas correctly assumed that the sarrukh were responsible, so they renewed the intensity of their attacks on Faerûn.

Currently, the khaastas and the sarrukh are at a stalemate. The sarrukh are in hiding in a heavily fortified position, and the khaastas have only vague clues as to where this stronghold might be. Meanwhile, the khaastas are becoming more and more entrenched in Faerûn, where they have staked out territorial claims in Okoth, the Heartlands, the Unapproachable East, and Mulhorand.

Illustration by Ralph Horsley



Khaasta raiders

outlook

The khaastas view Faerûn as a tremendously challenging place, where they must fight their own instincts to wage war against the native inhabitants while gathering the information necessary to hunt down the sarrukh. Since most of the scaly races inexplicably refuse to betray the progenitor race, the khaastas face the daunting task of gathering this information from humanoids and other civilized beings of Faerûn—groups that in fact know very little about the sarrukh.

khaasta society

The khaastas have always been willing to exploit weakness whenever they encounter it—even within their own species. Shortly after they were freed by Demogorgon, they fell to squabbling and nearly drove themselves to extinction through constant infighting. The reasons for such conflict ranged from simple dislike of their fellows to power struggles in which rival factions tried to oust leaders and assume control of various tribes. But the khaastas were no fools, and when they realized what a toll this infighting was taking upon their numbers, they instituted ritual combat as a method of handling disputes. Though khaastas continue to fight and murder one another, this arrangement results in far fewer deaths. Furthermore, because ritual combat forces each khaasta to stand up for itself when wronged, laws are virtually nonexistent.

Khaasta society in Faerûn, however, takes on a different form. Because the khaastas living there must remain focused on their main goal of eradicating the sarrukh, they tend to focus their combat skills on ridding their territory of menacing creatures rather than on engaging in glorious battle with one another. In addition, the highly magical nature of Abeir-Toril forces many to undertake training they would not otherwise have pursued simply to ensure the survival of their forces.

RELATIONSHIPS

Khaastas bear little love for one another under any circumstances, though they are disciplined enough to join forces when needed. They choose mates based primarily on battle prowess. Though unions are usually for life, mates rarely like one another and spend as little time together as possible. True friendships are likewise rare, since any personal alliances tend to dissolve in the next perceived insult or ambitious power play. Khaastas do, however, honor their parents and other mature relatives—albeit sometimes grudgingly.

LIFE CYCLE

Unlike many scaly races, khaastas are born alive, normally in litters of three or four at a time. Within a year of birth, each newborn's family gives her an ornate masterwork scimitar, which she is expected to keep and use in battle for the remainder of her life. Should a khaasta's blade ever be lost, she is expected to explain why her birth scimitar is no longer with her.

Khaastas begin training their young to fight at an early age. The females of the race are just as aggressive as the males, and they often carry their young into battle with them. During the ten years it takes for a khaasta to mature, she learns swordsmanship, armor use, and the art of ritualized combat.

As soon as a khaasta comes of age, she must enter a ritualized battle to first blood with a peer of the same age. The loser owes a blood debt, or favor, to the victor. Blood debts are almost always collected within the first year after the battle, and they normally involve some kind of combat—most often protection of the winner's person during a raid. Since failure in such a duty means immediate exile from the tribe, young khaastas are quite willing to fight to the death to fulfill a blood debt.

Virtually every khaasta that comes of age is a combatant. Because so few ever reach old age, their true biological lifespan remains uncertain, but most die before the age of thirty, with elders commonly living no more than ten years beyond that. Because khaastas consider it shameful to die of old age, many elders place themselves on the forefront of raiding parties and undertake dangerous missions against their enemies.

FUNEREAL CUSTOMS

When a khaasta dies in combat, her tribe holds a great feast to celebrate her departure. At the conclusion of the meal, the body is burned in a great bonfire, and the charred bones are interred in a shallow pit in the tribe's burial mound—usually a small hill in the Barrens of Doom and Despair. Journeying to the burial mound to inter the dead is a sacred duty offered as a reward for notable accomplishments in combat, and no more than five khaastas may escort any one deceased individual.

One per year, the khaasta migratory pattern takes each tribe to its burial mound. Upon arrival, the tribe holds a great feast and sacrifices one of its captive enemies in honor of the dead. The birth scimitar of each khaasta slain in the last year is passed down to the next individual born into that family. Should there be no young to receive the blade, the family name is inscribed upon the hilt, and the scimitar is left at the burial mound. A typical khaasta burial mound sports a ring of swords at the top, commemorating clans that no longer exist.

khaasta characters

Khaastas that are part of the larger force opposing the sarrukh almost never desert their own kind. Khaastas encountered singly are either seeking information about the location of sarrukh or outcasts who have taken up the use of arcane magic.

Khaastas seeking sarrukh strongholds normally travel in groups of two or three, though they occasionally act alone. Most have learned to speak Common in order to converse with the civilized folk they encounter, but they remain aloof and evasive about their origins when speaking with natives of

Faerûn, never divulging their purpose or their feelings about external issues. Some hide their settlements well; others frequently relocate to avoid confrontation with any natives who might seek to destroy them.

Outcast wizards and sorcerers typically roam, often stumbling from one dangerous situation to another, until they are eventually killed or wander into groups of mercenaries or other evil-aligned creatures that prize their abilities. Occasionally, a khaasta finds herself in the company of good creatures, whom she quickly labels as weak. Such alliances are usually doomed to failure because of the friction such an attitude generates within the group.

Magic of the Khaastas

Khaastas are not naturally inclined toward arcane spellcasting—in fact, in the Barrens of Doom and Despair, khaastas that can use arcane magic are almost unheard of. Normally, the khaastas simply call upon their demonic allies to provide magic for them when needed. The demons typically oblige such requests more out of hatred for whatever beings the khaastas are fighting than any loyalty they feel toward their allies.

The war with the sarrukh, however, has caused the khaastas to revise their way of thinking to some degree. Their strategy of placing near-permanent settlements in Faerûn while raiding sarrukh strongholds from their home plane has created a need for magic that allows them to move between the planes. Sess'innek initially provided them with such magic, but they have since acquired a large number of magic items that allow planar travel as well.

In Faerûn, khaasta wizards and other wielders of arcane magic are beginning to appear. But because the khaastas are superstitious folk by nature, those who have learned to use magic are often rejected by their tribes upon returning to their planar homes. This practice has led a few small groups of khaastas to carve out permanent homes for themselves in Faerûn. Such outcasts normally find work in mercenary bands of other races, but a few have discovered lizardfolk tribes and taken up residence as their shamans.

Deities of the Khaastas

Khaastas venerate the demonic Sess'innek rather than an actual deity. The worship of Sess'innek has more to do with the arrangements previous generations of khaastas made with him than with any actual respect on the part of those currently living.

The khaastas are not particularly religious, which is fine with Sess'innek as long as they fulfill the minimum requirements he sets forth—namely a certain number of sacrifices in his name. The khaastas sacrifice approximately one out of ten prisoners to Sess'innek. Clerics exist, though they do not receive their spells from Sess'innek, and their value is measured by their ability to fight and restore the wounded to health rather than by the spiritual guidance they can provide.

On the other hand, the khaastas venerate their ancestors almost as gods. Each khaasta learns the names and deeds of past generations for as far back as the older clan members can recall. Such information is passed down in the oral tradition and never written down. Before going into battle or facing some other trial, the khaastas call not upon the favor of Sess'innek, but upon the blessings of their ancestors. Periodically, each clan performs ceremonies of remembrance to honor the lives of their ancestors.

Relations with Other Races

Despite their innately vicious nature and traditionally short tempers, the khaastas have mounted no attacks on the civilized regions of Faerûn. In fact, they have taken care to maintain amicable relations with all the civilized creatures they have encountered, so as to prevent splintering of their power through local conflicts. A few orcish tribes ousted from their territory by the newcomers have attempted to strike back, but their attacks have been both costly and ineffective.

Khaasta Equipment

In addition to their birth swords, khaastas prize fine weapons and armor above all else. Though khaastas rarely make their own magic items, many sport magic weapons or armor that they have taken from enemies or received as gifts from their demonic allies.

Lizard Kings

Lizard kings (or lizard queens, as the females are called) are half-fiend lizardfolk that have assumed the leadership of numerous lizardfolk tribes throughout Faerûn. Violent, chaotic, and evil, they lord their power over their subjects, driving them to war with surrounding settlements. Most lizard kings seek to conquer rival lizardfolk tribes and subjugate them under their rule. Because they worship the demon Sess'innek, lizard kings recognize the khaastas as potential allies and aid them when called upon.

Overview

Lizardfolk tribes under the rule of lizard kings tend to be more advanced than those without such leaders. They typically employ higher technology, making their weapons and armor out of steel rather than natural materials. Such tribes generally form permanent settlements complete with stone or wood dwellings, rather than roaming the wilderness as nomads. Their tactics in combat are also more organized, allowing them to hold formations and use traps to advantage. Lizardfolk under the leadership of a lizard king are also much more likely to have character classes than others of their kind.

Description

A lizard king resembles a lizardfolk but may have any of several demonic features, such as glowing red eyes, extra spines, extra-long arms, long fangs, or additional scaly frills. Each individual is different, depending on its exact heritage. Lizard king statistics appear on page 68.

Racial History

Lizard kings arose in Faerûn when the demon Sess'innek, in an effort to aid the khaastas in their war against the sarrukh, sent his lesser demons to Faerûn to take control of as many lizardfolk tribes as possible. The lizardfolk resisted less than Sess'innek had predicted, caving quickly to the will of their demonic conquerors. Some of the tribes even began to worship the demons as gods. The demons bred with the lizardfolk for their own amusement, killing any offspring as soon as they hatched.

Time passed, and the war between the khaastas and the sarrukh failed to end, so Sess'innek ordered the demons to place a creature loyal to them in charge of each tribe and return to the Abyss. No lizardfolk were deemed suitable for such roles, since they had a tendency to switch alliances frequently, especially when their allies weren't nearby to remind them of their commitments. Thus, the demons decided to allow a few of their own half-fiend/half-lizardfolk offspring to live. These so-called lizard kings were then placed in charge of the tribes that the demons had controlled. Like their demonic parents before them, the lizard kings interbred with the tribes under their control, producing some offspring like themselves and some normal lizardfolk children. They did not slay all their offspring outright, however, wishing to ensure their own lines of succession.

The lizardfolk did not reject the lizard kings, and the tribes under their control prospered and became more advanced. The news of their achievements spread to other tribes, some of them many miles away, whose members became jealous. As a result, many lizard king young were stolen and raised to adulthood, then placed in charge of the tribes that had fostered them. While the lizard kings didn't mind their offspring bringing more lizardfolk under the control of Sess'innek, they sometimes lost their most promising heirs in such raids. A period of general warfare ensued. Since the lizardfolk tribes without lizard kings were almost never as advanced as those with them, most conflicts ended with the slaughter of the weaker tribe and the absorption of any survivors by the conquering tribe.

By the time this succession of small wars ended, numerous smaller tribes had disappeared, and the lizard kings had become even stronger. The lizardfolk tribes that existed outside the lizard kings' spheres of influence (more than half of Faerûn's lizardfolk population) were not involved in the wars, and their societies continued as they had previously.

Outlook

Violent, cruel, and often despotic, lizard kings combine the worst features of lizardfolk and demons. But although the blood of demons flows in their veins, they feel responsible for the tribes entrusted to them. Their Abyssal heritage gives them the ambition, intelligence, vision, and power to bring their tribes up from savagery and create stable, enduring civilizations. Lizard kings rarely desert a tribe once they have ruled it, and their chaotic natures almost never express themselves as wanderlust.

Lizard King Society

Lizard king society is inextricably entwined with that of standard lizardfolk, with some notable differences. Because of their voracious appetite for humans, the lizardfolk of their tribes constantly raid caravans and try to capture travelers passing through the nearby areas. The lizard kings make every effort to keep such raids well away from civilized regions, understanding that if stories of them were to reach the human cities, the elven settlements, and the dwarven strongholds, they and their people would be hunted down and either forced into hiding or destroyed outright.

In standard lizardfolk tribes, the strong use force to rule over those weaker than themselves. Lizard kings fit into this system very well, since their enhanced strength makes even the weakest of their kind more powerful than the strongest adult lizardfolk. Should the strongest lizardfolk in a tribe turn out to be more powerful than its lizard king, the lizardfolk is nevertheless expected to support the lizard king. Should the lizardfolk attempt to seize power, the clergy of Sess'innek and many of the elite lizardfolk warriors wage a lopsided battle against the would-be usurper. It is completely unheard of for a lizardfolk to defeat a lizard king in personal combat.

Only one law unites lizard kings, and that is that each tribe can have only one ruling lizard king and only one adult lizard king heir. Before this law was adopted, young lizard kings not chosen as heirs sometimes led rebellions that fractured their tribes and needlessly cost lives, and others abandoned their tribes, only to return and work against them later.

By their very nature, lizardfolk are more civil toward other lizardfolk than they are toward many of the other scaly races. Tribes under the rule of the lizard kings are no different, although they tend to be more warlike. Even if they are unhappy with the rule of a lizard king, they almost never rebel against him. Lizardfolk are simply too easily led by strong individuals, and they lack the power to organize on their own against a lizard king without alerting him that something is amiss.

Most lizardfolk from the outside that are absorbed into a tribe under the control of a lizard king are never given the same respect as the natives. The newcomers are usually the last to eat and the first to be sent to defend their settlements from intruders. The only exception is a lizardfolk warrior who has proven his valor on the field of battle or performed deeds that saved members of the tribe. Such newcomers are accorded a degree of respect, albeit grudgingly.

RELATIONSHIPS

Lizard kings mate with standard lizardfolk. The offspring of such unions are usually evenly split between lizard kings and standard lizardfolk. Lizard kings may have several mates whose company they enjoy, but such creatures are still perceived as lesser beings.

LIFE CYCLE

Lizard kings hatch from eggs in the same manner as ordinary lizard folk. Lizard king eggs are usually kept separated, however, since infant lizard kings tend to eat their siblings—especially those that turn out to be normal lizardfolk.

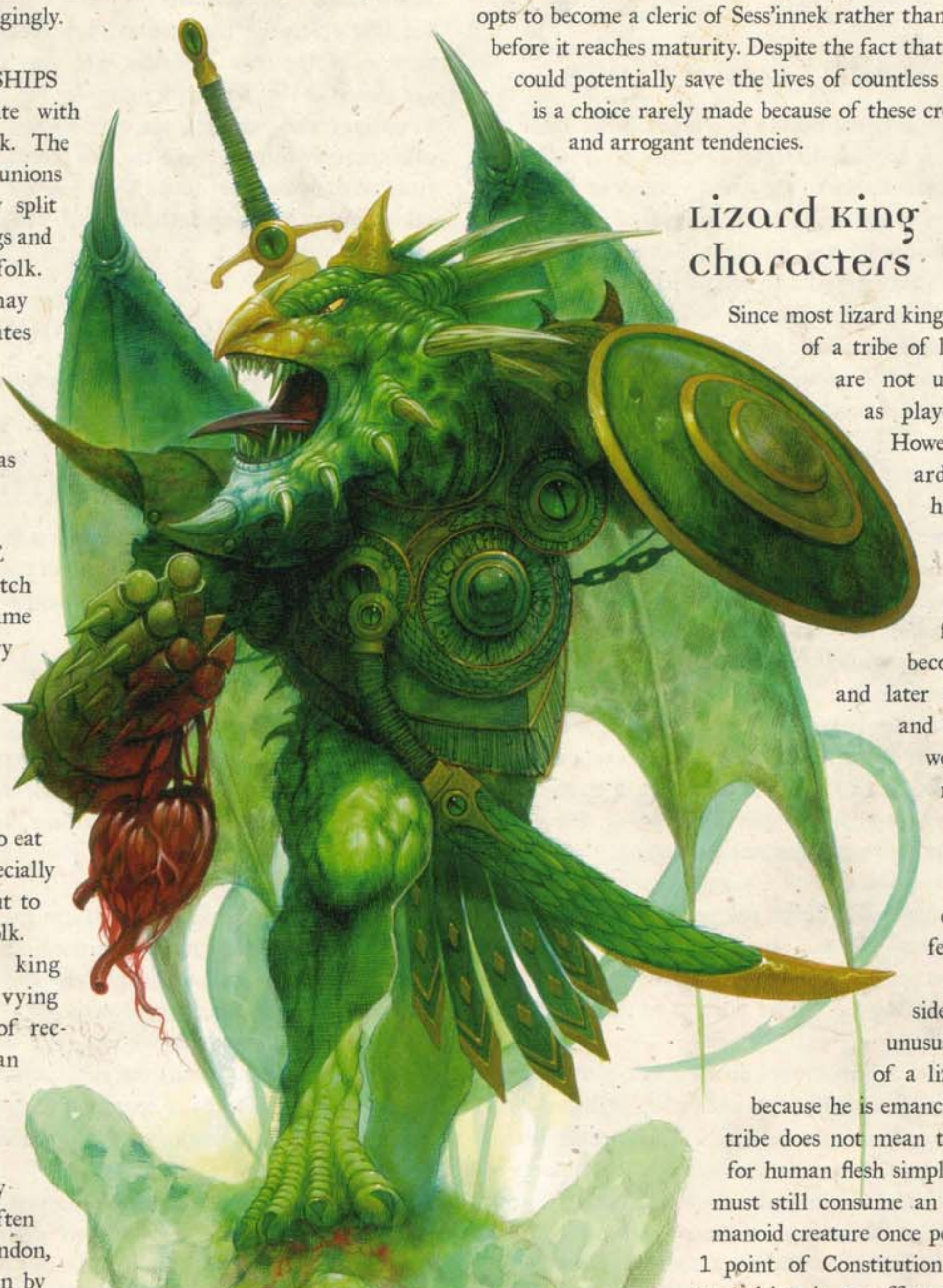
Most lizard king offspring begin vying for the position of recognized heir at an early age. Young lizard kings charge into combat as soon as they are able to do so, often with reckless abandon, and many are slain by their enemies. Those that survive continue to engage in combat whenever possible in an effort to prove their mettle, knowing that only the strongest of their number will ultimately survive.

Upon reaching maturity, the remaining lizard king offspring are gathered in a Ceremony of Choosing and judged by the current tribal ruler. The one deemed strongest and most fit to rule is named heir; the rest are sacrificed in Sess'innek's name and consumed by the tribe. The only exception is a lizard king that opts to become a cleric of Sess'innek rather than a tribal leader before it reaches maturity. Despite the fact that such an option could potentially save the lives of countless lizard kings, it is a choice rarely made because of these creatures' violent and arrogant tendencies.

Lizard King Characters

Since most lizard kings are in control of a tribe of lizardfolk, they are not usually suitable as player characters. However, young lizard kings that have not yet undergone the Ceremony of Choosing may fall in battle, become prisoners, and later be re-educated and set free in the world. In such rare cases, a lizard king might actually travel with others of different races.

Another consideration is the unusual dietary needs of a lizard king. Just because he is emancipated from his tribe does not mean that his hunger for human flesh simply vanishes—he must still consume an intelligent humanoid creature once per week or take 1 point of Constitution damage. This compulsion is an effect of the control that Sess'innek has over the lizard kings, and it cannot be negated without the use of *limited wish*, *wish*, or *miracle*.



The lizard king's feast

Illustration by Wayne England

Magic of the Lizard Kings

Most lizard kings use magic items that they have taken in tribute from conquered tribes or won in combat. Few, however, make their own, though tribal clerics keep the lizard kings supplied with healing items.

Deities of the Lizard Kings

Lizard kings worship the demon Sess'innek. Since most are not clerics, they appoint lizardfolk within their tribes as priests and shamans to see to the spiritual needs of their people. All members of a tribe under the control of a lizard king must worship Sess'innek and no other. But Sess'innek needs still more worshipers in order to ascend to true godhood, so lizard kings do their best to increase their patron's following. When a tribe expands because of conquest, the survivors are offered the option of joining the conquering tribe and worshiping Sess'innek, or death. Clerics from opposing faiths are slain on sight.

Sess'innek requires regular sacrifices in his name, but little else. Because this simple form of worship is not greatly different from that practiced by the faithful of the World Serpent, lizardfolk absorbed from other tribes often find it easy to convert to the worship of Sess'innek. Those that have difficulty making the transition are savagely beaten until their faith "increases." Those caught worshiping another deity after claiming conversion are sacrificed.

The compulsion for lizard kings to eat the flesh of creatures from the Material Plane is supported by religious ceremony. Twice a week, the lizard king holds a late-night ceremony in which a prisoner is brought to a dais in the temple. The victim is firmly secured and kept conscious throughout the ceremony. The clerics lead the tribe in a prayer to Sess'innek. While the lizardfolk continue to chant and pray, the victim's heart is cleaved from its chest and presented, still beating, to the lizard king, who promptly eats it. The clerics then divide up the corpse, presenting the largest portion to the lizard king for consumption.

Lizardfolk with a bent toward divine magic often become druids. While druidic lizardfolk are not forbidden, lizard kings strongly encourage devotion to Sess'innek. Thus, lizardfolk that pursue a druidic path are usually shoehorned into the clergy of Sess'innek, and their divergent abilities are explained to the rest of the lizardfolk as "following a different path of faith." In truth, they venerate their own deities to the same extent as the rest of the lizardfolk venerate Sess'innek, but they remain with the clergy to gain the support of the king. Lizardfolk druids that speak out against this artificial structure are challenged by the lizard king and the clergy of Sess'innek, then quickly subdued, sacrificed, and eaten.

Relations with Other Races

Lizard kings see humans, elves, dwarves, and other humanoids as food, not as allies or neighbors. Most scaly creatures are also not welcomed as allies by tribes under the rule of the lizard kings. Because lizard kings don't worship any aspect of the World Serpent, they consider any creatures that do so as enemies of the tribe. Khaastas, who also worship Sess'innek, are viewed as elite soldiers fighting for the same cause. Lizard kings may also permit trade with firenewts, and short-term alliances may form between the two races to deal with threats from other species. But lizard kings fear the firenewts' elemental nature, so they keep such allies well away from combustible items and structures.

Lizard King Equipment

Lizard kings always use the finest equipment available, usually of masterwork quality or better.

Troglodytes and Trens

Troglodytes and trens are similar creatures that inhabit the same environments and often live together in the same settlements. Both prefer cold, moist areas deep underground.

Overview

The sarrukh of Mhairshaulk created troglodytes to explore subterranean areas and guard their underground strongholds against incursions by Underdark races. The trens were the magically enhanced results of yuan-ti breeding experiments between troglodytes and lizardfolk that took place long after the fall of the sarrukh.

Both races regularly attack creatures passing through their territories. The trens fight in the front lines, keeping their opponents occupied, while the troglodytes throw javelins from a distance or employ other ranged weapons.

Troglodytes encountered without trens usually prepare ambushes for their foes. Their front ranks attack with clubs, while the others move in to flank opponents and attack with natural weapons. Meanwhile, troglodyte javelin throwers attempt to hit any enemies who try to use magic.

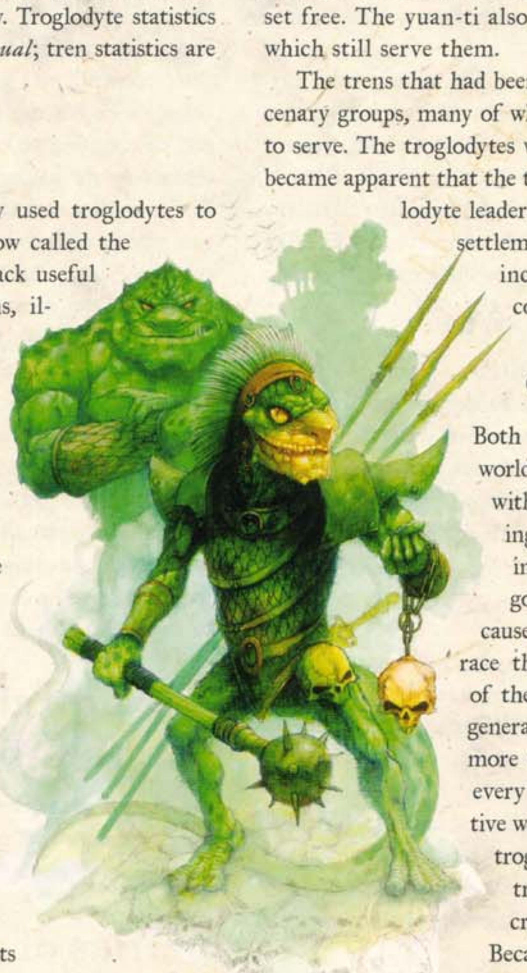
Trens encountered without troglodytes usually prefer to make a frontal attack against their enemies with martial weapons, while archers behind their own lines take aim at whichever opponents seem easiest to hit.

Description

The two races are physically very similar, though the trens tend to be stronger, more imposing, and less intelligent. A troglodyte is shorter than a typical human and has long arms. It walks erect on squat legs and has a long, narrow tail that it uses for balance. A tren is slightly larger than a troglodyte but more muscular. Its tail is longer and wider than a troglodyte's, and its limbs are more proportionate to its body. Troglodyte statistics appear on page 246 of the *Monster Manual*; tren statistics are provided on page 87.

Racial History

The sarrukh of Mhairshaulk originally used troglodytes to explore the region of the Underdark now called the Serpent Deeps. These agents brought back useful reports on the civilizations of aboleths, illithids, and other creatures that could potentially pose a threat to the sarrukh. Alarmed at this information, the sarrukh sent the troglodytes deep underground to act as sentries and warn them should any major invasions forces appear.



Troglodyte cleric and tren monk

Illustration by Wayne England

The denizens of the Underdark were eventually dismissed as minor threats, since they proved unable to cooperate in large enough groups to mount a reasonable offense against the sarrukh. A few attempts were made to claim sarrukh territory, but they all failed thanks to the troglodytes' early warnings.

When the sarrukh empire finally fell, the troglodytes disappeared from Mhairshaulk into the depths below. From there, they spread throughout most of Faerûn, establishing settlements near underground water sources where they could prey on the various wild creatures that lived in the Underdark. Their settlements prospered to such an extent that troglodytes eventually ranked among the most common creatures in the Underdark.

When the yuan-ti rose to prominence under the leadership of Sseth, they sought a servitor race to aid them in becoming the new masters of Faerûn. Many groups of troglodytes were rounded up and forced to serve in the armies of Serpentes. Soon, however, it became clear that although the troglodytes had been successful in the Underdark, their physical power left much to be desired. Thus, the yuan-ti decided to try altering them. The sarrukh magic that had allowed the transformation of scaly creatures into other forms had long since been lost, so the yuan-ti bred the strongest troglodytes with the most powerful lizardfolk and treated the eggs daily with the *bull's strength* spell. The result was the tren, a creature more physically powerful but less intelligent than either of its parent races.

The yuan-ti used the trens to defend and expand Serpentes. After its fall, many trens were traded to other powerful creatures for favors and magic. Ultimately, the trens' odor proved too offensive to their new masters, so almost all were set free. The yuan-ti also kept a large number of the trens, which still serve them.

The trens that had been released from service formed mercenary groups, many of which set out in search of troglodytes to serve. The troglodytes were initially suspicious, but when it became apparent that the trens would be willing to follow troglodyte leaders and not attempt to take control of settlements, they were welcomed and fully incorporated into many troglodyte communities.

Outlook

Both troglodytes and trens perceive the world as a cold and hostile place filled with creatures that are bent on destroying them. This viewpoint is not entirely incorrect, since they are hated by both good- and evil-aligned creatures because of their senseless attacks. The only race that seems to have a use for either of them is the yuan-ti, and the vrael olo generally prefer the trens because they are more capable in battle. Rejected by nearly every other creature because of their relative weakness and overpowering stench, the troglodytes take comfort in isolation and try to destroy any other intelligent creatures within their reach.

Because both the troglodytes and the trens have been servitor races in the past, they prefer to follow the most powerful creature that wishes to rule them. Since most other creatures avoid them, their leaders are usually the strongest among their own kind.

Troglodyte and Tren Society

A troglodyte tribe follows the most powerful individual—male or female. This chieftain appoints the next most powerful warriors as subchiefs, who in turn lead bands of warriors on raids. The chieftain rules the tribe until either she is slain in battle or her health declines to a point where she can no longer fight effectively. At that time, the tribe selects a new leader, often discarding all the old subchiefs in favor of younger warriors who have recently proven themselves in battle.

Noncombatants are few in troglodyte society. The females battle alongside the males and are no less ferocious. The young join raiding parties consisting of twenty to thirty troglodytes as soon as they are able to hold weapons. Each tribe, however, does have designated hunters and gatherers. These troglodytes rarely engage in combat on the front lines. Instead, they track prey through the Underdark, lead packs of warriors on hunting expeditions, or bring their tribes food when they are not engaged in a raid.

Troglodyte lairs are normally caves or underground caverns with multiple chambers in which the troglodytes can move about freely. Most are normally filled with all manner of waste and filth, and many feature standing bodies of brackish water. Troglodytes other than the chieftain don't call any part of the lair home, and they make a practice of bedding down in a different room, surrounded by different troglodytes, every night.

RELATIONSHIPS

Troglodytes remain with their mates as long as both are alive, but they take new ones when widowed—a state that occurs frequently. Troglodytes and trens can interbreed freely and with no stigma attached. Close friendships between individuals are rare, but each troglodyte treats all members of its tribe as family.

LIFE CYCLE

After a female troglodyte lays her eggs, they are secured inside a leather mesh net and placed in the tribe's waterway to incubate. A day or two before a clutch of eggs is due to hatch, the troglodytes remove them from the water to dry, so that their shells become brittle enough for the young to break.

When troglodytes interbreed with trens, each offspring has an equal chance to be of either race. The tren offspring are separated from the troglodytes immediately to prevent them from inadvertently injuring the growing troglodytes with their greater strength.

Both tren and troglodyte young are raised by the entire tribe rather than by their biological parents. The young can walk and hold weapons at two years of age. From that point until they reach maturity, they are given practice weapons and encouraged to fight one another. When they become older, they are given steel weapons and sent on hunting expeditions with the tribal hunters.

Most troglodytes eventually die in combat. Those who don't are considered tribal elders and are valued for the wisdom they are assumed to have accumulated over the years. One such elder is usually chosen to offer advice to the chieftain.

FUNEREAL CUSTOMS

After each battle, the troglodytes gather their dead for a final blessing from the tribe's clerics. Afterward, the corpses are eaten in a ceremony called as "The Renewal" in which the meat of the deceased is returned to the tribe.

Troglodyte and Tren Characters

Troglodytes and trens make interesting characters. Not only do their odors offend the senses of even the most accepting of the other races, but their penchant for eating their slain victims can be revolting to civilized races as well. Nevertheless, some characters are willing to accept them in adventuring parties. They may feel that the benefits of the odor outweigh the negative aspects of traveling with such a foul-smelling creature, or they may simply have no sense of smell.

Troglodytes most often advance in the cleric class, though many choose to be fighters. Their penalties to Intelligence and Dexterity do not automatically preclude rogue or wizard characters, but culture and a lack of exposure to those character classes ensure that most troglodytes do not take levels in them. Troglodytes separated from their subterranean settlements are often interested in the new types of creatures they meet, so they choose to go down alternate paths.

Trens are most commonly barbarians or monks, though they too can take other classes if they wish. The wizard class is a difficult option for a tren because of its –4 penalty to Intelligence.

Magic of the Troglodytes and Trens

Members of these two races rarely learn arcane magic, and even clerics are somewhat rare. Thus, troglodytes and trens have never developed any new spells or magic items of their own.

Deities of the Troglodytes and Trens

Since troglodytes were originally created by the sarrukh, they initially worshiped an aspect of the World Serpent. After the fall of the sarrukh empires, they shifted their worship to the bloated Laogzed. This foul deity, believed to be part demon, exists solely to consume food—namely, anything made of flesh and blood that can be ingested. Laogzed prefers to swallow his food alive, so that he can feel it move as he digests it.

The love of food pervades the worship of Laogzed, and every occasion is cause for a feast. After a victory, the troglodytes feast upon the corpses of their enemies. In order to hold great feasts as often as possible, they often overhunt the creatures in the surrounding areas, thus depleting their regular sources of food.

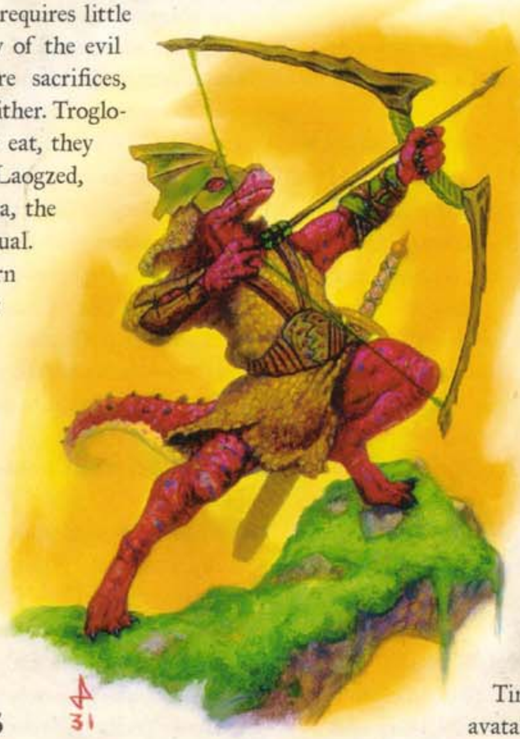
Clerics are useful to the troglodytes because they are capable of dealing out damage in combat and can heal themselves when wounded. With the low standards for worship Laogzed imposes on his followers, the troglodytes find it remarkably easy to be "religious."

Trens seldom choose to become clerics, since they generally prefer combat-oriented roles. Thus, in purely tren tribes, clerics are considered valuable and irreplaceable. For that reason, tren clerics are kept from combat most of the time and given less dangerous duties, such as guarding the eggs and preparing food. Because of the limited role they are allowed to play in tren settlements, they tend to advance more slowly than the warriors. Thus, they can provide less healing for the wounded combatants returning from a battle than the clerics of a troglodyte tribe.

Other than feasting, the deity requires little from his worshipers. Unlike many of the evil deities, Laogzed does not require sacrifices, although he does not reject them either. Troglodytes believe that every time they eat, they are sending the consumed food to Laogzed, who enjoys it again. By this dogma, the very act of eating is a religious ritual. Laogzed grants them spells in return for their worship and the constant feasts they provide for him.

Trens that are on their own tend to be godless. They may know of Laogzed, but they feel no compulsion to worship him. Trens under the control of the yuan-ti give their worship to whichever deity their masters require.

Illustration by Jim Pavelec



Chassan, the firenewt death knight

Relations with other Races

As evil as their progenitors, troglodytes and trens attack any creature entering their territory, and they often raid settlements of other nearby creatures without provocation, either to gain supplies or out of pure aggression. Troglodytes don't question their leaders' motives when ordered to attack their neighbors, they simply do as they are commanded.

Troglodyte and Tren Equipment

Troglodytes are obsessed with steel. Since they lack the technical understanding necessary to forge weapons, they often mount expeditions to pillage steel armor and weapons from various Underdark ruins. They also gain steel from raiding neighbors who do have the technology to forge steel. Steel weapons and armor gained from such expeditions are given to the most powerful warriors first, so the less-accomplished members of a tribe are the last to get good-quality gear.

Though trens have the same instinctual lust for steel, the only items they keep are steel greatswords. The rest they happily turn over to the troglodytes.

Lizard Race Encounters

Player characters can encounter members of the lizard races individually or in groups almost anywhere, often supported by small groups of followers. Most settlements are found in remote locations, though some can be surprisingly close to humanoid communities.

Ready-to-use villains and Allies

The lizard races often pursue prestige classes of various kinds, particularly those that enhance their combat ability. The following firenewt character can be woven into adventures or encountered individually.

CHASSAN

Chassan is the leader of the Ack'ta tribe of firenewts in the Peaks of Flame. During the Time of Troubles, Chassan served as Kossuth's avatar. The Flamelord's divine essence was too much for his mortal form, and all that was left of the firenewt after the god's departure was a blackened husk. After Kossuth returned to the Elemental Plane of Fire, however, he transformed the charred remains of Chassan into a deathflame. (The deathflame template is the same as the death knight template, except that it can be applied to monstrous humanoids.) Now Chassan is the overlord of his tribe, but by Kossuth's decree, the clerics are also answerable to him.

Following his transformation into a deathflame, Chassan called for a war against the other nearby tribes inhabiting the Peaks of Flame. While war is not uncommon between tribes of firenewts, Chassan easily conquered all the tribes within a 100-mile radius by following a series of complex battle plans laid out by Kossuth himself. Rather than putting the conquered firenewts to the sword, as was customary, Chassan instead gave them a choice—join his tribe or die. Three-quarters of the conquered firenewts chose to join, expanding his tribe significantly. Now Chassan is making plans to march to Mezro and conquer it in Kossuth's name.

Currently, there is growing uncertainty within the combined firenewt tribe about Chassan's ability to lead them because of his status as a deathflame and his long-term plans, which he has failed to explain to them. Many of the fighters would like to band together against him, but they have seen him in battle and doubt that they have the power to destroy him. Worse yet, the clerics fully support Chassan, so his rivals cannot count on any magical support within the tribe.

Those opposed to Chassan have begun secretly enlisting help from outside the tribe, though doing so has not been easy. Most races of Chult know about the brutality of the firenewts and want nothing to do with them on any level. Others agree to help, but require a price so high that only the tribe's gold statue of Kossuth would be sufficient to pay them.

Chassan is aware of the plots against him, but he remains unconcerned. He knows that he is supported by his clerics and most of his army, and that he would stand a good chance of winning a battle against the entire tribe, if necessary. Chassan would be happy to execute those who plot against him right now, but he has stayed his hand so far because he is sure that they will reveal themselves to the rest of the tribe soon enough. At that time, he can execute them without the risk of making them martyrs.

Chassan: Male firenewt deathflame fighter 5/rogue 2/blackguard 8; CR 19; Medium undead (fire, reptilian); HD 2d12 plus 5d12 plus 2d12 plus 8d12; hp 110; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 27, touch 12, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +16; Grp +22; Atk +22 melee touch (1d8+1 plus 1 Con, touch) or +27 melee (1d8+11 plus 1d6 fire/19–20 plus 1d10 fire, *+5 flaming burst unholy longsword*) or +23 ranged (1d8+5/×3, *+5 longbow*); Full Atk +22 melee touch (1d8+1 plus 1 Con, touch) or +27/+22/+17/+12 melee (1d8+11 plus 1d6 fire/19–20 plus 1d10 fire, *+5 flaming burst unholy longsword*) or +23/+18/+13/+8 ranged (1d8+5/×3, *+5 longbow*); SA abyssal blast, breath weapon (fire), command undead 4/day, poison use, smite good 2/day, sneak attack +3d6, touch attack; SQ aura of despair, aura of evil, damage reduction 15/magic, dark blessing, darkvision 60 ft., *detect good,* evasion, fiendish servant, immunities (cold, fire, electricity, polymorph), spell resistance 27, summon mount, trapfinding, turn immunity, undead followers, undead traits, vulnerability to cold; AL NE; SV Fort +14, Ref +12, Will +10; Str 22, Dex 15, Con —, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 13. Height 7 ft.; Weight 185 lbs.

Skills and Feats: Balance –2, Climb +13, Diplomacy +9, Disable Device +3, Heal +8, Hide +1, Intimidate +10, Knowledge (religion) +9, Listen +5, Move Silently +0, Ride +13; Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Precise Shot.

Abyssal Blast (Su): Once per day, Chassan can unleash eldritch fire in a 20-foot-radius spread within a range of 1,080 feet. The blast deals 17d6 points of damage (half fire and half divine, Reflex DC 19 half).

Breath Weapon (Su): Once every 10 minutes, Chassan can breathe fire on an opponent within 5 feet. This attack deals 1d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 11 half).

Command Undead (Su): Chassan commands undead as a 6th-level evil cleric.

Poison Use (Ex): Chassan is skilled in the use of poison and never risks accidentally poisoning himself when applying poison to a blade.

Smite Good (Su): Chassan may attempt to smite good with one normal melee attack. He adds +1 to his attack roll and deals 8 extra points of damage. Smiting a creature that is not good has no effect but uses up the ability for that day.

Touch Attack: Chassan deals 1d8+1 points of damage plus 1 point of Constitution damage with a successful touch attack. A successful DC 19 Will save halves the damage and negates the Constitution damage.

Aura of Despair (Su): Chassan radiates a malign aura that causes every enemy within 10 feet of him to take a –2 morale penalty on all saving throws.

Aura of Evil (Ex): Chassan radiates a strong aura of evil.

Dark Blessing: Chassan applies his Charisma bonus to all saving throws (already figured into the statistics given above).

***Detect Good* (Sp)**: Chassan can use *detect good* at will as the spell.

Fiendish Servant: Chassan does not presently have a fiendish servant.

Summon Mount (Su): Chassan can summon a mount (typically a nightmare) with up to 8 HD.

Turn Immunity (Ex): Chassan cannot be turned, though he can be banished with a *holy word* as if he were an evil outsider.

Undead Followers: Chassan has 34 Hit Dice worth of skeletons, ghouls, ghasts, wights, and zombies as followers.

Undead Traits: Chassan is immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. He is not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage to his physical ability scores, ability drain, energy drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or death from massive damage. He cannot be raised, and resurrection works only if he is willing. Darkvision 60 ft.

Blackguard Spells Prepared (3/2/2/1; save DC 13 + spell level): 1st—*cause fear, cure light wounds, doom;* 2nd—*bull's strength, darkness;* 3rd—*contagion, cure serious wounds;* 4th—*inflict critical wounds.*

Possessions: +3 chainmail, heavy steel shield, *+5 flaming burst unholy longsword, +5 longbow,* 50 arrows.

Hidden Folk

The races known as the hidden folk exist outside ordinary society in the Serpent Kingdoms and can pose serious threats to neighboring creatures. The one common feature of the Hidden Folk, aside from their Scaled Ones designation, is the fact that they do not wish to be found.

Illustration by Jeremy Jarvis

Ophidians

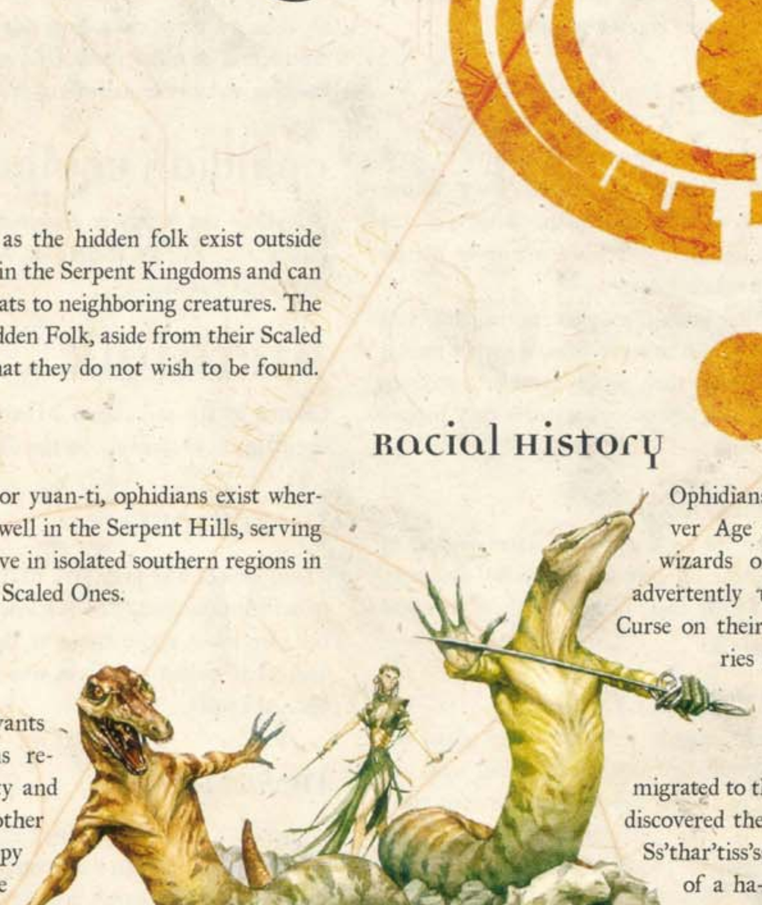
Most often servants of nagas or yuan-ti, ophidians exist wherever their masters are. Many dwell in the Serpent Hills, serving their yuan-ti masters; others live in isolated southern regions in the service of nagas and other Scaled Ones.

Overview

Once human Netherese servants of House Orogoth, ophidians retain no hint of their humanity and no aspirations to a lifestyle other than servitude. They are happy to carry out the orders of more powerful serpentfolk, including dark nagas, spirit nagas, and yuan-ti. Ophidians almost never act independently of their masters.

Description

An ophidian has a wide, serpentine torso with short, stubby legs and humanoid arms ending in clawed hands. Its head is lizardlike, and its tail is short in proportion to its body. It walks upright and can climb in a sort of half-slither, like a snake. Its scales are typically mottled green and yellow, with brown, black, and red also appearing in some individuals. An ophidian's scales change color to help it blend into wooded or subterranean surroundings. Ophidian statistics appear in the *Fiend Folio.*



Ophidians

Racial History

Ophidians date back to the Silver Age of Netheril, when the wizards of House Orogoth inadvertently unleashed the Serpent Curse on their servants. After centuries of dragon worship, the savage ophidian tribes of the High Moor and the Serpent Hills migrated to the Forest of Wyrms and discovered the ruined sarrukh city of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun. Under the guidance of a ha-naga king and its summoned yuan-ti nobility, the ophidians established Najara, the Kingdom of Snakes, after the fall of Netheril.

When Najara fell to the Shadowking of Ebenfar in the Year of Moor Birds (90 DR), most of the surviving serpentfolk fled north into the Serpent Hills to rebuild their realm. The Kingdom of Snakes reemerged, based in the Serpent Hills and ruled by its first dark naga king, in the Year of the Prowling Naga (142 DR). During the centuries that followed, the power of the serpentfolk grew slowly in the face of hostility from the Scaleless Ones—in particular, the Shoon Imperium, the Kingdom of Cormyr, the Tri-Crowned Kingdom of Phalorm, the Kingdom of Delimbiyran, and the Principality of Boareskyr.

Although most ophidian tribes migrated north into the Serpent Hills after the fall of Najara, some fled to warmer lands to the south. Most of their descendants now dwell in isolated southern wilderness regions, often led by a handful of powerful nagas.

outlook

Ophidians perceive the world as a pairing of masters and slaves, and they happily assume the latter role. An ophidian considers it a privilege to carry out any order from a more powerful serpentfolk, whether that master is cruel or kind.

ophidian society

Ophidians have little in the way of society. They live to serve the yuan-ti and never worry about building their own culture. Ophidians perform much of the unpleasant labor for the yuan-ti, and they serve on the front lines whenever danger from the outside threatens their masters.

Ophidians that lose their yuan-ti masters immediately seek some other powerful Scaled One to serve. Should such a master not be immediately available, they simply wander aimlessly, fighting with one another and any other creatures they happen to encounter.

RELATIONSHIPS

Yuan-ti often select mates for their ophidian slaves as part of breeding programs to improve the race. Ophidians feel no special bond to mates or peers within their own race; their strongest bond is to the one they serve.

LIFE CYCLE

Ophidian females lay their eggs in any convenient place and then abandon them. No ophidian, male or female, feels any connection to its young, or indeed any need to care for them unless so ordered.

When the young ophidians hatch, they swarm aimlessly in search of food until an older ophidian or other serpentfolk gives them direction. Ophidians are raised in servitude, receiving ever more complex orders in keeping with their age and physical power.

ophidian characters

Ophidian characters are extremely rare, since these creatures devote their lives to servitude rather than self-improvement. However, an ophidian might join an evil party if it can be convinced that at least one party member is a suitable master.

magic of the ophidians

Despite the magic that spawned their race, ophidians have neither talent for nor interest in magic. They rarely become spellcasters, since doing so represents not only a degree of ambition that is almost unknown in their race but also a talent for judging the best use of power.

Deities of the ophidians

Like many other slave races, ophidians worship whatever deities their masters tell them to. Masterless ophidians sometimes worship nagas, dragons, or other powerful reptiles.

Relations with other Races

Ophidians are malicious creatures that delight in the torture and destruction of other races. Despite their innate cruelty, they are fawning and servile in dealings with more powerful Scaled Ones.

ophidian Equipment

Ophidians use whatever equipment their masters provide, but they make none of their own. Masterless ophidians often use scavenged weapons.

pterafolk

Created by the sarrukh of Mhairshaulk, pterafolk have always lived almost exclusively on the Chultan Peninsula.

overview

These violent and primitive lizardkin live in loosely organized tribal communities. The tendency for each pterafolk to place her own needs above those of the others results in a confused and often violent society in which the strong feel free to tread upon the weak.

Description

A pterafolk resembles a larger-than-normal lizardfolk with no tail. Its small, smooth scales range in color from olive green to shades of tan. Its hands and feet are long and thin, ending in sharp talons. Ordinarily it does not have wings, but when it has need of flight, it can either turn its arms into leathery wings or assume the form of a pteranodon. Pterafolk statistics appear in *Monsters of Faerûn.*

Racial History

The sarrukh of Mhairshaulk used the lizardfolk as the base creature for creating the pterafolk. They gave their new creations flight and the ability to shift forms to improve their versatility in combat. They also made the pterafolk more aggressive than standard lizardfolk in order to make them more eager warriors. But while this alteration did indeed produce more effective killers, it also made them difficult to manage. When added to the armies of Mhairshaulk, pterafolk units enhanced their killing ability at the cost of poorer control.

The pterafolk stayed primarily under the control of the sarrukh until the fall of Mhairshaulk. At that time, many of the races that had opposed the sarrukh made an effort to track down and destroy all the pterafolk settlements, thus forging an enmity that has lasted for tens of thousands of years.

outlook

Pterafolk rarely play major roles in the conflicts of Faerûn for two reasons—they are almost completely unable to trust anyone who approaches them with offers of work, and they are too aggressive (even toward one another) to work effectively in groups. For the most part, the natives of Chult regard them as simply one of many threats to society. The one notable exception occurred when Kaverin Ebonhand assaulted the Chultan city of Mezro in the Year of the Wyvern (DR 1363). Ebonhand somehow managed to enlist several dozen pterafolk into his army, and they fought fiercely against the inhabitants of the city. When their human commander was slain in battle, however, they disbanded and fled.

pterafolk society

Pterafolk don't function as a group unless they are conducting raids or engaging in other activities that benefit individuals at least as much as the whole group. Within a tribe, pterafolk are separated into clans, each of which normally consists of immediate family members. Often, clans are interrelated to such an extent that a tribe is nothing more than an extended clan.

Relationships

Most pterafolk are loyal to their immediate families and to other clans with which they have forged alliances, but not to anyone else. Betrayal and infighting are common within the greater pterafolk society.

Life Cycle

A pterafolk female lays her eggs on a high mountain peak within her own clan's territory, and both parents tend them until they hatch. As soon as the young are capable of finding their own food, the parents introduce them to their clan.

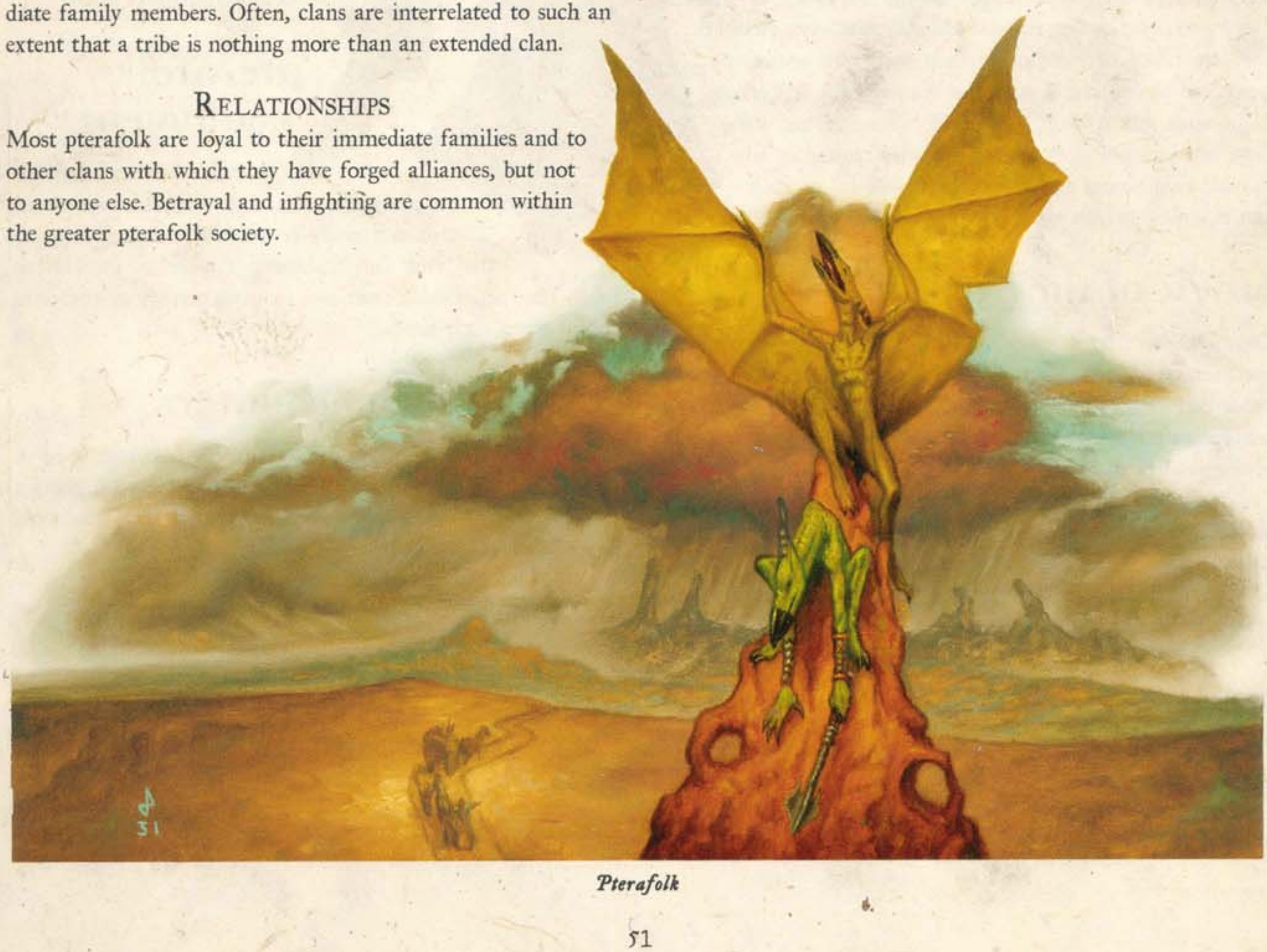
Most pterafolk die in battle. Their corpses are looted by their own clans and then left to rot where they fall, since there is no benefit to any individual in elaborate funereal customs.

Organization

A pterafolk tribe is usually led by a spirit naga chieftain. The pterafolk take their requests and disputes to the spirit naga, who is expected to have the wisdom or raw might to satisfy everyone. But the chieftains, who are normally more interested in satisfying their own desires, make alliances with the pterafolk who can best help them do so and ignore the requests of others. A pterafolk clan that feels slighted by the chieftain may attempt to kill it and replace it with a more responsive one. Laws exist at the discretion of the spirit naga chieftain and are enforced by the individual who has been wronged.

The criteria used to measure the power of each clan include established loyalties, fighting prowess, size, and possessions. Of these, loyalties tend to be the most important. Several families within a tribe may form an alliance, agreeing to help one another promote their own interests. Such alliances may focus on the resolution of internal difficulties, or they may simply be agreements to help one another in raids. In the latter case, the agreement

Illustration by Jim Pavelec



Pterafolk

normally includes a defined method (though not necessarily an equitable one) for splitting the spoils. Clans that have established numerous links with other individuals and clans within their tribes are considered powerful but not always trustworthy.

Fighting prowess varies from one clan to another. Some clans care little for combat training and prefer to fight by instinct. Others are more organized, requiring their members to undergo regimented combat training. Members of such clans normally have levels of fighter, barbarian, or ranger.

The size of a pterafolk clan factors into its overall standing because a clan with numerous members has the raw power to overwhelm others that are competing for the same resources. Pterafolk often fight amongst themselves, and whether or not an outright battle begins is often determined by one clan's ability to stand against another. Possessions include the territory the clan has staked for itself, as well as equipment and structures.

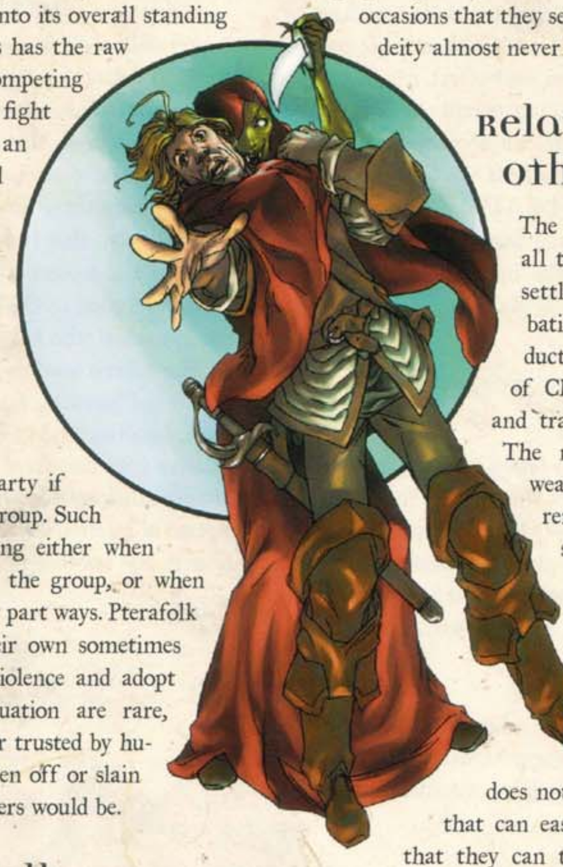


Illustration by Kalman Andrasofszky

pterafolk characters

A pterafolk may join an adventuring party if its goals happen to match those of the group. Such alliances are normally short-lived, ending either when the pterafolk has made enemies within the group, or when everyone's objectives are realized and they part ways. Pterafolk that are raised by races other than their own sometimes overcome their natural penchant for violence and adopt alignments other than evil. Such situation are rare, however, since pterafolk are almost never trusted by humanoid civilizations and are usually driven off or slain in the same way that other hostile invaders would be.

magic of the pterafolk

Pterafolk don't trust magic, so only a rare few ever become spellcasters of any kind. Divine spellcasters are somewhat more common than arcane ones, since spirit naga chieftains sometimes take on pterafolk students, whom they later place in positions of prominence.

This general distrust of magic gives rise to a hatred of arcane magic items among the pterafolk. Given the chance, pterafolk steal such items and destroy them at their earliest convenience. Unlike the dragonkin, however, the pterafolk are not innately compelled to seek magic items.

deities of the pterafolk

Like most of the scaly races of Faerûn, the pterafolk originally worshiped the World Serpent. When that deity fragmented, they transferred their worship to Shekinester, the deity of their spirit naga chieftains. For the pterafolk, worship of Shekinester centers around the belief that the ultimate agents of creation are those of destruction and chaos. Because these forces are constantly at work within their society, the pterafolk find it easy to worship this deity.

While the spirit naga chieftains form the religious focus of their society, the pterafolk themselves spend little time in worship. Instead, they act as agents of Shekinester's will, sewing the seeds of destruction wherever they happens to be. The pterafolk often pray only before or during a battle or raid, or on the rare occasions that they seek divine intervention, which their deity almost never gives.

relations with other races

The pterafolk pose a serious threat to all the major races surrounding their settlements, including humans and batiri (goblins). They regularly conduct raids on the villages and towns of Chult and assault supply caravans and travelers passing through the area. The nearby settlements have grown weary of pterafolk raids and are currently working to find the creatures' strongholds in order to chase them out of their territory.

pterafolk equipment

Pterafolk prefer armor that does not cover their arms and equipment that can easily be carried on a bandolier, so that they can transport it while in pteranodon form. They often make their own weapons and armor to ensure that it meets their needs.

hidden folk encounters

Player characters can encounter hidden folk individually or in groups almost anywhere. Ophidians are nearly always in service to more powerful creatures, but pterafolk may be encountered in warbands or as individuals.

ready-to-use villain

The hidden folk have access to most of the same classes as humanoid characters. The following pterafolk character can be encountered alone or with his tribe.

K'RR'ZAALT

K'rr'zaalt is the chieftain and spiritual leader of the Kron'ikl tribe of pterafolk. Following the untimely death of its spirit naga chieftain at the hands of adventurers, the tribe was in shambles. K'rr'zaalt, who had been taught the dogma of Shekinester by the old chieftain, decided to assume control of the tribe when no other leaders emerged.

Several months after he appointed himself chieftain, the tribe encountered a group of spirit nagas on their way to a meeting known as the Great Conclave. They invited K'rr'zaalt to attend, and he accepted. At the end of the conclave, he was deemed worthy to lead his tribe.

K'rr'zaalt now regularly attends the Great Conclave and is the only pterafolk there. Many of the spirit nagas are not happy with this arrangement, and some have been plotting to assume control of the Kron'ikl tribe. K'rr'zaalt is aware of these plots, but he does not know that some of his own people are conspiring to overthrow him.

K'rr'zaalt: Male pterafolk cleric 8 of Shekinester; CR 11; Large monstrous humanoid (reptilian, shapechanger); HD 4d8+20 plus 8d8+40; hp 114; Init +4; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft.; fly 30 ft. (average) with wings/50 ft. (good) as pteranadon; AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +10; Grp +20; Atk +15 melee (1d6+6, claw) or +17 melee (1d8+8, *+2 heavy mace*) or +9 ranged (1d10/19–20, heavy crossbow); Full Atk +15 melee (1d6+6, 2 claws) and +13 melee (1d8+3, bite) or +17/+12 melee (1d8+8, *+2 heavy mace*) or +9 ranged (1d10/19–20, heavy crossbow); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rebuke undead 3/day; SQ *alternate form,* darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +14; Str 23, Dex 10, Con 20, Int 8, Wis 19, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +14, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +2, Hide –2, Jump +9, Knowledge (religion) +1, Listen +8, Spellcraft +1, Spot +8; Alertness, Chameleon Hide, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack.

Alternate Form **(Sp)**: At will, a pterafolk can change its arms into leathery wings or assume the form of a pteranodon as a full-round action. It can remain in either form for as long as desired. Returning to its normal form requires another full-round action.

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/5+1/4+1/4+1/3+1; save DC 14 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, detect poison, light, purify food and drink, read magic;* 1st—*cause fear, command, doom, hide from undead, protection from law*, shield of faith;* 2nd—*bull's strength, darkness, desecrate, shatter*, silence;* 3rd—*contagion, dispel magic, invisibility purge, magic circle against law*, wind wall;* 4th—*chaos hammer*, cure critical wounds, death ward, poison.*

*Domain spell. Deity: Shekinester. Domains: Chaos (cast chaos spells at +1 caster level), Scalykind (rebuke/command lizards and snakes 3/day).

Possessions: +2 heavy mace, heavy crossbow, 25 bolts, *cloak of resistance +1, bracers of armor +5,* 2 *scrolls of cure moderate wounds,* holy symbol, 6 torches, 388 gp.

VASSK

Like most ophidians, Vassk lives to serve. Until recently, he served Sasyk Vatoros, a pureblood yuan-ti wizard working for House Eselemas in Lushpool. However, Sasyk was caught trading magical secrets to House Se'Sehen and fled Lushpool with his belongings and Vassk in tow. Assassins sent by the Eselemaa caught up with Sasyk and Vassk near Hlondeth. They managed to kill Sasyk before Vassk chased them off. Now, Vassk wanders the land in search of a new master—preferably another yuan-ti, although he may be drawn to serve a non-yuan-ti with strong leadership qualities.

Vassk: Male ophidian barbarian 10; CR 12; Medium monstrous humanoid (reptilian); HD 3d8+6 plus 10d12+20; hp 123; Init +4; Spd 30 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 50 ft.; AC 22, touch 14, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +13; Grp +17; Atk +18 melee (2d6+7/17–20, *+1 greatsword*) or +17 melee (1d4+4, bite) or +18 ranged (1d8+5/×3 plus 1d6 cold, masterwork composite longbow with *+1 frost arrow*); Full Atk +18/+13 melee (2d6+7/17–20, *+1 greatsword*) and +12 melee (1d4+4, bite) or +18/+13 ranged (1d8+5/×3 plus 1d6 cold, masterwork composite longbow with *+1 frost arrow*); SA rage 3/day, serpentine curse; SQ DR 2/—, darkvision 60 ft., fast movement, improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +3, uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +10, Ref +10, Will +7; Str 18, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Climb +14*, Hide +5 (+15 in forests or underground), Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Spot +4, Swim +13; Alertness, Dodge, Improved Critical (greatsword), Power Attack.

*Vassk has a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks (already factored into his statistics) and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

Rage (Ex): Three times per day, Vassk can enter a state of fierce rage that lasts for 7 rounds. The following changes are in effect as long as he rages: hp 149; AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 16; Grp +19; Atk +20 melee (2d6+10/17–20, *+1 greatsword*); Full Atk +20/+15 melee (2d6+10/17–20, *+1 greatsword*) and +14 melee (1d4+6, bite); SV Fort +12, Will +9; Str 22, Con 22; Climb +16*, Swim +15. At the end of his rage, Vassk is fatigued for the duration of the encounter.

Serpentine Curse (Su): Any humanoid hit by Vassk's bite attack must succeed on a DC 11 Fortitude save or contract a curse that will turn the victim into an ophidian. Starting 1d4+1 days after infection, the victim slowly becomes more snakelike: Its skin grows scaly, its legs begin to shrink and fuse together, and its tongue becomes forked. After two weeks, the victim is fully transformed into an ophidian, with no memory of its previous existence. To stop the transformation, the victim must receive a remove disease or remove curse spell before the process is complete, although these spells do not undo any transformation that has already begun. A *heal, regenerate, limited wish, wish,* or *miracle* spell is required to reverse the transformation. Once the transformation is complete, nothing short of a *wish* or *miracle* can return the victim to its previous state.

Improved Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Cannot be flanked and can only be sneak attacked by a character who has at least fourteen levels of rogue.

Uncanny Dodge (Ex): Vassk retains his Dexterity bonus to AC even when flat-footed or targeted by an unseen foe (he still loses his Dexterity bonus if paralyzed or otherwise immobile).

Possessions: *+1 chain shirt, +1 greatsword,* masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str bonus), 20 *+1 frost arrows* and 10 arrows.

SARRUKH

One of the five original progenitor races (also called creator races) of Faerûn, the sarrukh built and maintained empires across most of the continent in the distant past. These ancient, evil creatures are now all but gone, and even the name of their race has long been lost to the ages. Most sages who know of their past glory refer to them simply as the saurians, or the progenitors of the Scaled Ones.

The sarrukh have, however, left a lasting legacy: the racial diversity of Faerûn's scaled races. It was the sarrukh who took the scaly animals and monsters native to Toril and modified them into sentient beings such as yuan-ti, nagas, pterafolk, and others.

Overview

At one time, the sarrukh dominated all of Faerûn. Their mighty empires—the first in the world—encompassed the jungles along the shore of Azulduth, the eastern shore of the Narrow Sea, and the Chultan Peninsula. The sarrukh enslaved or sacrificed other creatures in the name of their god, the World Serpent.

Eventually, problems of their own making caused the sarrukh empires to crumble. In the vacuum created by the fall of the sarrukh, their created races rose to prominence, establishing power centers of their own—many of which are still active today. Amazingly, however, the sarrukh have managed to remain relevant even in modern-day Faerûn. Despite their small numbers, they can still command the loyalty of the races they once created. But an immense rift has opened up between the surviving sarrukh clans, and the enmity among them could lead to a period of open warfare between the scaled races.

Description

Sarrukh bodies come in two shapes: bipedal and snakelike. The latter resemble certain yuan-ti abominations, with snakelike bodies and heads as well as powerful arms that end in vicious claws. The bipedal sort has a humanoid upper torso, humanoid arms and legs, and a snakelike lower body. All sarrukh have distinctive, gleaming red eyes that strike fear into the hearts of all the scaly races.

Racial History

The first significant civilizations of Toril were the empires of the sarrukh, which rose and fell between −35,000 DR and −33,500 DR. This race of intelligent scaled creatures first appeared in the area known as Okoth, south of Mulhorand. The development of the sarrukh was relatively uncontested in their homeland, and their population quickly surpassed the level sustainable by the local resources. Thus, the sarrukh were forced to expand. They spread rapidly throughout much of Faerûn, conquering other lands and sowing the seeds for civilization as they went. They encountered short-lived and disorganized resistance from the savages that inhabited the lands, but the fact that the sarrukh had already learned to smelt iron for steel weapons and armor made them virtually invincible. Within a hundred years, most of Faerûn was theirs.

The Mhairshaulk Empire arose in −34,800 DR on the Chultan peninsula, and the Isstosseffifil Empire followed in −34,500 DR, based in what is now the Great Desert of Anauroch. Okoth, the first of the sarrukh empires, still encompassed the race's original homeland. Lesser realms, including the city of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun (in what is now the Forest of Wyrms) and the city of Ilimar (which is split between the Great Swamp of Rethild and the Gulthmere Forest) sprang up outside of these two great empires. These regions constituted the major hubs of sarrukh civilization, and the first stable *portals* in Faerûn were created to connect them.

As the sarrukh spread out, they discovered that the shamans of the chaotic races living in certain wilderness areas held magical lore that they had not yet encountered. After studying these primitive forms of magic, the sarrukh consolidated their discoveries into a series of tomes. Upon completion, the books where brought to Oreme, the capitol of Isstosseffifil, for study. The most magically gifted among the sarrukh and their servitor races pored over these tomes, which contained both easily researched magical knowledge and obscure information. The empires of the sarrukh didn't last long enough to gather the full fruits of their work, but this collection of minds eventually grew into its own secret organization, which was called the Ba'etith. The members of this group consolidated and extrapolated the bounds of their newly found knowledge, penning the *Golden Skins of the World Serpent* (otherwise known as the *Nether Scrolls*) many thousands of years after the fall of the empires.

The empires continued to grow until the sarrukh had conquered so many races that they became the minority in their own empire. Thousands of other races fulfilled their needs and satisfied their every desire. The sarrukh savored the finest meats, surrounded themselves with gold, gems, and other finery, and enjoyed all the luxuries of a civilization at its height. But as with so many empires since, their increasing dependence on other races and their growing indolence spelled the beginning of the end.

Okoth was the first empire to fall, collapsing about −34,100 DR after a century of civil strife that drove many sarrukh to the planes. Isstosseffifil followed suit around −33,800 DR when, during a war with the phaerimms, its leaders rerouted the Narrow Sea, flooding the Underdark and precipitating climatological changes that doomed their own realm. Mhairshaulk was the last to fall, sliding into a slumber from which it never emerged circa −33,500 DR.

Although most of the sarrukh died in the collapses of their great empires, many survived. The sarrukh of Isstosseffifil retreated into lichdom in the depths of Oreme where, protected by the asabis they had created, they sleep safely to this day. The sarrukh of Mhairshaulk, faced with starvation, began a cycle in which thousand-year hibernations alternated with brief periods of activity, during which food gathering and procreation could take place. The great clans of Okoth wandered the planes for millennia but never found a plane where they wished to remain for more than a generation. This nomadic existence hardened them, turning them inexorably toward evil.

As the sarrukh of Okoth increasingly embraced their darker natures, a few dissenters, despairing of their kindred's push toward evil, broke off from the main group. They entreated Jazirian, a fragment of the World Serpent, for succor, and it responded by transforming them into couatls. A bitter war ensued, but the couatls held their own against the more numerous Okothian sarrukh until Merrshaulk, a darker fragment of the World Serpent, finally slew Jazirian. At that point, the couatls were forced to flee to Abeir-Toril, where they eventually settled in Maztica. The god Qotal embraced them as his

The Creator Races

The five creator races (or Iqua-Tel'Quessir, in the language of the Fair Folk) dominated Faerûn during the Days of Thunder. All are considered native to Abeir-Toril, as are their descendants and creations. Most historians agree that the creator races were the sarrukh (known as sauroids, or creators of the serpentfolk and scalykind), the batrachi (known as amphibioids, or creators of the bullywugs, doppelgangers, kopru, kuo-toa, locothah, sivs, tako, and other shapeshifting, amphibious, or piscine races), the aearee (known as avians, or creators of the aaracokra, kenku, other birdlike humanoids), the fey (known as sylvans, or creators of korreds, sprites, and pixies), and humans. Other sages leave out the aearee but include dragons in the list. Elves, dwarves, and some human ethnic groups were immigrants to Abeir-Toril from other worlds.

Although five creator races existed in Faerûn, only four forged empires in the earliest days of recorded history (known today as the Days of Thunder), and only three contributed to the creation of the items now known as the *Nether Scrolls*. The sarrukh, batrachi, and aearee each dominated Faerûn in turn, creating or producing as offspring a host of lesser races and recording the magic of more primitive peoples. The fey have never dominated the continent; they chose instead to rule Faerie, an otherworldly realm loosely connected to Faerûn. Humans, the last of the Iqua-Tel'Quessir, did not rise to rule Faerûn until after the Time of Dragons and the elven and dwarven empires.

Except for the humans, the fate of the creator races is largely unrecorded. A few sarrukh lurk in ancient ruins and southern jungles, but most of their kindred departed for other planes millennia ago. The batrachi may be extinct, although a few scholars believe they fled to Limbo, where they became known as slaadi. The aearee flew westward to the great continent north of Maztica, and nothing is known of their fate. The fey still rule Faerie, although the ties between their realm and Faerûn are growing faint. Humans continue to thrive, as do crossbreeds with partial human ancestry, such as the yuan-ti.

divine minions, and they acknowledged him as Jazirian reborn. Most remained there, but a few couatls eventually returned to Faerûn to deal with the fell legacies of their kindred in the Jungles of Chult. This splinter group embraced Ubtao as its patron deity.

After the war with the couatls, the sarrukh began to explore the Barrens of Doom and Despair, where they happened upon the khaastas. Believing these creatures to be inferior and weak reptilians, the sarrukh attempted to enslave them. Much to the invaders' surprise, not only were the khaastas extremely resistant to serving, but they also had powerful demonic allies willing to aid them. Thus began a centuries-long war between the sarrukh and the khaastas, which the sarrukh ultimately lost. To escape the wrath of the victorious khaastas, the sarrukh secretly returned to Faerûn and began skulking around the ruins of Okoth, on the shores of Azulduth.

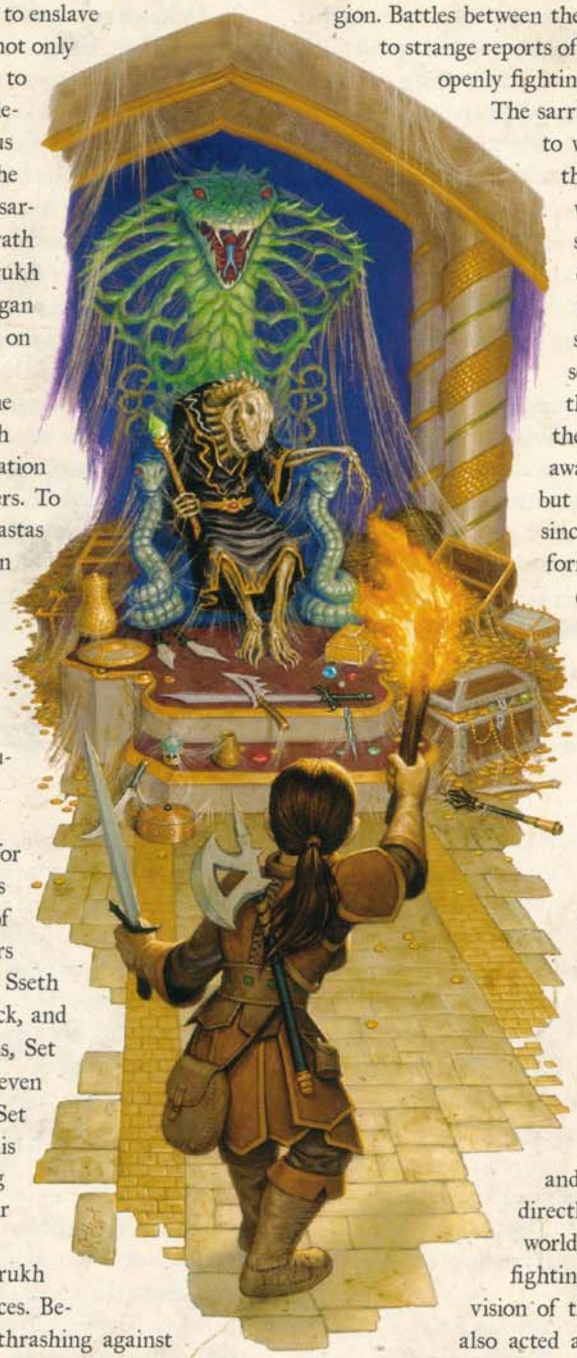
Before the Fall of the Gods, the Okothian sarrukh realized that Sseth had sunk into some sort of hibernation and was barely answering their prayers. To complicate matters further, the khaastas had finally tracked them to Faerûn and were seeking to obliterate the last few of them. Lacking the full support of a divine patron, the sarrukh once again found themselves in danger of extinction.

Then, during the Time of Troubles, Sseth stopped answering prayers from the Okothian sarrukh altogether. Clerics of Okoth felt the need for action, so the approached the minions of Set and bargained with the Lord of Evil. Set agreed to answer their prayers if they in turn aided him in binding Sseth to eternal slumber. The deal was struck, and at the conclusion of the Avatar Crisis, Set claimed Sseth's portfolio. About eleven years after the Time of Troubles, Set began answering the prayers of all his newly acquired worshipers (including the yuan-ti, who still believed their divine power to come from Sseth).

The treachery of the Okothian sarrukh has resulted in unintended consequences. Beset by nightmares, Sseth has begun thrashing against his bonds, awakening the serpentfolk elsewhere in Faerûn. The sarrukh of Mhairshaulk are emerging from hibernation, seeking a means by which to liberate their god from his prison and oppose the Okothian sarrukh. Toward that goal, the Mhairhshaulk sarrukh have begun working to re-energize the long-slumbering yuan-ti empire known as Serpentes.

In Okoth, the Cult of Set is growing in strength under the leadership of Pil'it'ith, the legendary albino sarrukh leader. The cult's membership consists primarily of Scaled Ones, but a few others have joined its ranks as well. Opposing the cult are the khaastas, which have begun appearing in the Lakes of Salt region. Battles between these two ancient foes have given rise to strange reports of tremendously powerful lizard races openly fighting one another.

The sarrukh have not forgotten the heights to which their race once climbed, but they also know that many other races would happily eradicate the last few sarrukh should they learn of their continued existence. Thus, they choose to remain in hiding, quietly seeking to increase their numbers so that they can one day rebuild their ancient empires. Occasionally the sleeping sarrukh of Mhairshaulk awaken and draw the yuan-ti to them, but even these former servitors have since found their own leaders in the form of anathemas. On the rare occasions that sarrukh do become involved with the outside world, they work to help the scaled races that they created.



How the mighty have fallen

Illustration by Carl Frank

outlook

The sarrukh are well aware that their race has fallen far from the heights it achieved just after the dawn of time. Though they are individually powerful, their low numbers now force them to rely upon the races that serve them, creating a high degree of vulnerability.

During the heyday of their empires, the sarrukh became lazy and domineering. Rather than become directly involved with the rest of the world, they delegated their building and fighting to the lizardfolk and the supervision of those activities to the yuan-ti, who also acted as their personal servants. To the nagas they delegated the tasks of magical research, exploration, and guarding individuals and places of importance. The sarrukh withdrew within the walls of their palaces and never emerged without heavy protection.

Despite the fall of Isstosseffifil, Mhairshaulk, and Okoth, the attitude of the sarrukh has changed very little. They have an interest in knowing what is happening in the world, but they still choose to remain separate from it. Rather than go out and explore, they send out their yuan-ti servants or small groups of nagas to learn what they can and report back to them.

Preserving each and every living sarrukh is now the most important consideration for the race. Because none are expendable, sending one out into humanoid society is always a critical decision, even if there is much to be gained by doing so. In the past, a few sarrukh have used magic to take human form and infiltrate the leadership structures of human societies, posing as advisors or other important officials.

sarrukh society

At its height, sarrukh civilization was as grand as that of any humanoid empire that has risen since. The arts flourished, and anything was available in the great markets of the sarrukh empires.

Relationships

Sarrukh form lasting friendships unmarred by the petty jealousies and bickering that mark many of their servitor races. They take mates for life and treat other sarrukh with respect. In the days of the empire, one or two sarrukh constitutes a household, but circumstances have since forced many to live in communal groups.

Life cycle

Sarrukh hatch from eggs that are protected and tended by both parents until they hatch. A sarrukh can live up to a thousand years, or much longer if it undergoes periods of hibernation. This deathlike sleep, which can last for years at a time, preserves the sarrukh's body and temporarily eliminates its need for food, water, and other valuable resources.

Beyond these facts, little is known about the life cycle of these creatures. Few creatures living today have had occasion to study the race up close, and the sarrukh, for their part, aren't willing to share their secrets with "lesser beings." Thus, they have remained godlike in their obscurity.

organization

While the three great empires thrived, the sarrukh were organized into several great clans that lived in relative peace with one another. The clans that commanded the most troops and held the most political power (by virtue of either wealth or social standing) made up the leadership structure. The acting leadership body of each empire was called the Sh'arrim and consisted of five to eight sarrukh drawn from the great clans. This group elected an emperor, called a kudzar, from its membership. The Sh'sarrim from the three great empires occasionally came together in Okoth to form a council called the Kazim, but that body had authority over the entire race only when a unanimous vote could be achieved.

The khuzdar provided spiritual, strategic, and social leadership for the rest of the sarrukh. The two most famous khuzdars were Ghiz'kith, founder of Mhairshaulk, and Pil'it'ith, the albino sarrukh who drove Ghiz'kith from Okoth. Pil'it'ith ruled Okoth until its fall, then used powerful magic to prolong his life into the modern day. (Pil'it'ith remains the leader of the Okothian sarrukh, but he no longer wields any authority over the sarrukh in Serpentes or Anauroch.)

Sarrukh law, which was administered by judges known as kleigmasters, was strict but flexible. Penalties were stiff, and the burden of proof fell to the accused rather than the prosecutors. The sarrukh disliked jailing citizens, so the preferred methods of punishment were death for more serious crimes and disfigurement for minor ones. Incarceration occurred only when the leaders felt that the offender had something important to contribute to the realm, despite his crime.

Penalties were assigned on a case-by case basis for greater flexibility, but the system became corrupt over the years. The same crime might result in death for one defendant and only disfigurement for the next. In any case, even the highest-ranking kleigmaster could be bribed into setting free the worst-offending defendant if enough money changed hands.

slavery

The sarrukh began keeping slaves even before they had any dealings with other species. Enslaving their own kind was viewed as right and proper, as long as the slaves received proper care and fair treatment. Sarrukh slaves lived in their masters' homes, received good food, and were not overworked. Occasionally they were sold or traded from one sarrukh to another, but for the most part, slaves remained with the same family for life. When a slave became too old to work, he might be freed, or assigned to rear the master's young, or be sacrificed to the World Serpent, according to his own wishes and his past performance.

Upon discovering the other progenitor races, the sarrukh quickly realized that such creatures would make passable servitors and enslaved them. Since the sarrukh felt little social responsibility for creatures of other races, nonsarrukh slaves were not treated nearly as well as sarrukh slaves. A Scaleless One might be starved for days at a time and then beaten for her inability to work. In the early days of the sarrukh expansion, Scaleless Ones were not even viewed as worthy sacrifices for the World Serpent. This abysmally low status meant that they could be killed with impunity and eaten by their masters.

By the founding of Isstosseffifil and Mhairshaulk, the sarrukh had enslaved so many creatures that they had stopped keeping sarrukh slaves at all. Each sarrukh lived in comfort, surrounded by the finery that had once been reserved for their leaders. Eventually, the sarrukh stopped fighting their own wars and trained their slaves to fight for them, promising that the best warriors would be freed to enjoy the same lifestyle as the sarrukh. Occasionally they actually kept this promise and freed a particularly powerful warrior as an example to the others. The lure of freedom and wealth created an enormous and loyal fighting force that helped the sarrukh maintain control over their empires.

Eventually, Scaleless Ones were deemed suitable sacrifices for the World Serpent, thereby freeing the sarrukh from the need to choose sacrifices from among citizens of supposedly equal rank. Though the World Serpent did not object to the decision, it did violate his original agreement with the sarrukh. To maintain the letter of the agreement while accommodating the changing needs and demands of his worshipers, the World Serpent split off an aspect of himself that was called M'daess, whose task was to purify the souls of unclean sacrifices and make them equivalent to sarrukh.

The Scaled Races

Part of the reason that nonscaled slaves were treated so poorly was the fact that their masters actually loathed them. They found the Scaleless Ones' odor offensive, their primitive languages grating on the nerves, and their smooth skins unsettling.

While exploring Faerûn, the sarrukh encountered numerous scaly animals in the wilds, including dinosaurs, snakes, and lizards. Some of these animals were developing along the same lines as the ancestors of the sarrukh had, but they hadn't evolved to the point of sentience yet. The sarrukh collected thousands of such creatures in hopes of breeding one or more new intelligent races to serve them.

Realizing that breeding programs alone would not be enough, the sarrukh began magical experimentation on the creatures they had collected. They combined a few of their scaly specimens with humans to see whether a single servitor race that was less offensive to them could be formed. Their earliest experiments resulted in badly deformed creatures that didn't survive long. But through selective breeding and more subtle forms of magical manipulation, the sarrukh finally managed to create viable races that were much more to their liking.

Their first successes were the asabis, the lizardfolk, and the pterafolk. Though not as intelligent as humans, these creatures had the same bipedal form and were relatively easy to manipulate. Once they had reassured themselves as to the loyalty of these races, the sarrukh began handing off fairly easy tasks to them. At first they were trained as personal servants, then as warriors. Finally, entire groups of them were planted in the wilds of Faerûn in the hopes that they would multiply and conquer the surrounding territories.

The next successful experiment produced the nagas. Though the sarrukh approved of the serpentine form with a humanoid head, the nagas proved difficult to control. Rather than destroy their creations, however, the sarrukh allowed those who posed little threat to remain in their service as guards, explorers, and magical researchers. The rest were freed.

Their final—and perhaps finest—creation was the yuan-ti, developed by the sarrukh of Mhairshaulk. This race represented the first truly successful cross between human and sarrukh, with a touch of serpent thrown in. The yuan-ti came in several different physical forms, depending on the amount of sarrukh blood used. Though not as obedient as the lizardfolk subraces, the yuan-ti were more biddable than the nagas, and highly intelligent besides. Because they greatly enjoyed being in charge of Scaleless Ones, the yuan-ti became the slavemasters, military leaders, and managers of the sarrukh empires.

With so many highly skilled servitors, the sarrukh were no longer forced to find their own food, build their own cities, or even care for their own slaves. The sarrukh of Mhairshaulk slowly withdrew from the cares of the world as they turned over more and more of their responsibilities to the yuan-ti. For their part, the yuan-ti appreciated the lifestyles that their creators allowed them to have, so they remained mostly loyal. A few, however, would periodically withdraw from sarrukh society, strike out on their own, and form their own groups. The sarrukh knew of such defections but ignored them, knowing that yuan-ti who were allowed to leave in peace would go out into the world and create their own societies, which the sarrukh could later call upon for aid.

Dwellings

The sarrukh lived in stonework buildings, which were typically adorned with the holy symbols of the World Serpent. Icons set into the walls depicted the sarrukh concept of divine creatures, which often appeared demonic by modern standards. Statues of sarrukh in plazas, courtyards, and along the roadways depicted either the noble sarrukh leaders, resplendent in their flowing robes, or armored sarrukh in dramatic battle stances.

Sarrukh Characters

Because they are extraordinarily powerful creatures, all sarrukh with class levels are automatically epic-level characters. While the *Epic Level Handbook* is not necessary to understand and use the statistics presented in these pages, DMs wishing to let their players run sarrukh characters will find it immensely helpful.

Magic of the Sarrukh

The sarrukh's magical research resulted in two major contributions to the development of magic in Faerûn: the *Nether Scrolls* and the secret of physically manipulating other creatures.

The *Nether Scrolls* were the results of sarrukh efforts to compile, deconstruct, and extrapolate the magic gleaned from the savages that inhabited most of Faerûn during the early days of the sarrukh empires. Penned by the Ba'etith long after the sarrukh empires had fallen, these scrolls remain an invaluable reference today.

The second major contribution of the sarrukh was the discovery of permanent transforming magic that affects the bodies of other creatures. This technique allowed the sarrukh to permanently transform a creature's physical body and also grant it new extraordinary and supernatural abilities. Furthermore, such characteristics were invariably passed along to the next generation when the altered creatures bred with members of their original races. Eventually, the sarrukh found a way to imbue themselves with the ability to use this magic at will. Unfortunately, this technique has been lost to the ages and now resides only in the remaining sarrukh, though portions of it are embodied in the *ability rip* and *trait removal* spells (see Chapter 11.)

Deities of the Sarrukh

According to sarrukh mythology, the World Serpent came to the sarrukh when they were still savages, offering to teach them the secrets of magic, civilization, and power. All that he demanded in return was that they worship him and offer sacrifices to him. The sarrukh agreed to his terms and were rewarded for their loyalty with great knowledge and power.

During the heyday of their empires, all sarrukh worshiped the World Serpent. As they expanded outward into Faerûn, they forced the populations they conquered into the worship of the World Serpent as well. This practice made enemies not only of the dominated races, but also of their gods.

Sacrifice

Sacrifice is an important aspect of the World Serpent's dogma. (See Chapter 2 in *Book of Vile Darkness* for the specific rewards attainable from sacrifices.) The World Serpent was especially demanding on the subject of suitable sacrifices, insisting that the victim be not only intelligent (Int 3 or higher) but also an actual sarrukh. In most cases, religious zealots readily gave their lives for their god, so only rarely was the sacrifice a criminal or a social derelict.

Sacrifices initially occurred on a weekly basis. The priests gave the designated victim whatever he desired for a period of three days. Any food, drink, or indulgence of the flesh was provided on demand, and the victim was permitted to stay in any accommodations desired, including the various imperial strongholds in Okoth. The victim was watched closely by security but otherwise treated as royalty.

Upon the night of the sacrifice, the sarrukh gathered the community together to pray to the World Serpent. After treatment with incense, the sacrificial victim carved his own heart from his chest with a ceremonial dagger. With the still-beating heart in his hands, the high priest smeared the blood of the sacrifice on his own body and those of the other clergy, then all the priests withdrew to their temples.

As the practice of sacrificing Scaleless Ones to the World Serpent in place of sarrukh gained in popularity and the number of conquered races increased, so too did the number of weekly sacrifices. Scaleless Ones were rarely given the royal treatment that sarrukh had been, and few were really willing. Thus, the sacrifices took on the aspects of wholesale slaughter. At the height of the sarrukh civilization, up to a hundred sentient creatures might be rounded up and sacrificed on any given night at each temple. The priests assumed the duty of removing the hearts of the victims, since nonsarrukh really could not be depended upon to carry out this essential task themselves. Because the blood of these creatures had an odor they considered foul, the sarrukh priests discarded the ritual of smearing the spilled blood on themselves.

After the fall of their empires, the sarrukh no longer had other races under their control, and their own population was so low that they could not afford to throw their own lives away. Worse yet, the yuan-ti who had served them in Mhairshaulk were no longer willing to sacrifice themselves on behalf the sarrukh. Nevertheless, the World Serpent still demanded obedience and sacrifices. To appease him, the sarrukh sacrificed either lizardfolk or other creatures that their servants brought to them. The number of sarrukh sacrifices dropped drastically in the aftermath of the empire because of both the lack of available sacrifices and the sarrukhs' lengthy hibernations.

The Fragmentation of the World Serpent

At the height of the sarrukh empires, the World Serpent literally fragmented into an entire pantheon, each deity of which was a different aspect of himself. Sages agree that this event was precipitated by the conflicting needs and demands of an ever more diverse base of worshipers.

Following the fall of the sarrukh empires, the worship of the World Serpent almost completely vanished, although he continued to supply spells to the creatures that still worshiped deities embodying portions of his essence. See the Appendix for complete information on the deities worshiped by the Scaled Ones.

Relations with other Races

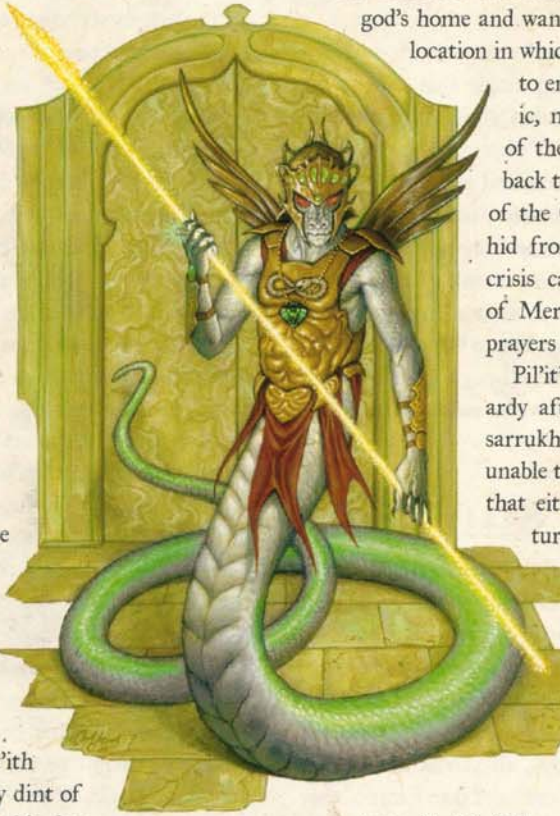
The sarrukh consider themselves far better than the vermin known as humans, who have somehow managed to become the most powerful species in the world. They nurse a deep-seated hatred for the dragons and the phaerimms, and they find other powerful creatures (such as aboleths, illithids, and beholders) to be little more than annoyances.

Sarrukh Equipment

The sarrukh prefer magic items to other equipment, though many do employ personal weapons of various kinds. In general, however, servitor races still constitute the sarrukh's best tools and weapons.

Sarrukh Encounters

The following villain could oppose heroes seeking to unlock the secrets of the serpent kingdoms or thwart the sarrukh's plans for world conquest.



Pil'it'ith

Illustration by Carl Frank

Pil'it'ith

The snake-bodied sarrukh named Pil'it'ith was the last emperor of Okoth, and by dint of powerful magic, he remains alive to this day. Pil'it'ith is an albino—in fact, he is the only albino sarrukh currently alive in Faerûn. Because of the lack of pigment in his scales, he must remain in complete darkness. If exposed to direct sunlight, he takes 1d4 points of nonlethal damage per round.

After the fall of Okoth, Pil'it'ith remained the leader of the great clans that took to the planes. While in the Outer Planes, he had the audacity to seek out the fragment of the World Serpent known as Merrshaulk to ask for his guidance. When he arrived at Merrshaulk's home plane, the god was deep in slumber, and his serpent guards refused to admit the sarrukh to his stronghold. Pil'it'ith, however, defied the guards and stirred the god from his slumber.

Merrshaulk would have destroyed most mortals for disturbing him, but he recognized Pil'it'ith and granted him an audience. He thanked the sarrukh for overseeing the creation of the serpent races of Faerûn that had come to worship him. He then commanded the albino to lead the remaining sarrukh to a place where they could establish a homeland. Once they were settled, the god promised to watch over them and help them to rebuild.

Pil'it'ith, having grown old after his nearly eight hundred years of life, begged Merrshaulk for one additional favor. In return for his active promotion of the god's interests, he asked to be raised to the status of a Chosen. Merrshaulk had never taken a Chosen before because such an act required the expenditure of a great deal of divine power. Nevertheless, recognizing the benefit of having such a strong follower, he granted Pil'it'ith's request.

The Chosen of Merrshaulk led his sarrukh followers from the god's home and wandered the planes, looking for an ideal location in which to start again. A misguided attempt to enslave the khaastas turned the barbaric, nomadic, lizards into mortal enemies of the sarrukh, who eventually had to flee back to Faerûn. Pil'it'ith remained in charge of the Okoth stronghold while his followers hid from the vengeful khaastas. The next crisis came when Sseth (the reborn aspect of Merrshaulk) abruptly stopped answering prayers during the Time of Troubles.

Pil'it'ith's leadership was suddenly in jeopardy after he had ruled over generations of sarrukh. For weeks he hid the fact that he was unable to contact Sseth, but finally he declared that either Sseth was either dead or he had turned his back on his people. In either case, they needed a replacement deity. Pil'it'ith had heard of the god Set, whom he had always (incorrectly) assumed was a fragment of the World Serpent. He had learned that Set was still granting spells (albeit only to those who visited him directly) and was in contact with his followers. Pil'it'ith arranged a dialogue with the Lord of Evil and convinced the god that his people were willing to follow him if he would grant them spells.

Pil'it'ith introduced Set to his followers, claiming that the Mulhorandi god was Sseth's successor. The sarrukh of Okoth were satisfied with this arrangement but, as the Avatar Crisis drew to a close, Set revealed to Pil'it'ith that the Okothian sarrukh would have to help bind Sseth into eternal slumber in return for his favor. After they complied, Sseth began to thrash against his bonds. In so doing, he awoke many Mhairshaulk sarrukh and Serpentes yuan-ti and energized them to extend their dominion over the Scaleless Ones of Faerûn once more. Sseth's only conscious action thus far, however, has been to strip Pil'it'ith of his title and power as Chosen.

Pil'it'ith has remained leader of his tribe, though his body's clock has started up once again, bringing him ever closer to death. He is the only sarrukh that still remembers the great empire his people once controlled. Despite the setbacks he has endured, he still intends to re-establish some measure of control over the world, and he intends to retain his position as leader.

Pil'it'ith: Male sarrukh cleric 15 of Set; CR 36; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 14d8+84 plus 15d8+90; hp 304; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 38, touch 13, flat-footed 35; Base Atk +18; Grp +23; Atk +28 melee (1d4+5, claw) or +28 melee (1d8+11/×3, *+4 brilliant energy unholy longspear*) and +23 melee (1d4+2, bite); Full Atk +28 melee (1d4+5, 2 claws) and +23 melee (1d4+2, bite) or +28/+23/+18/+13 melee (1d8+11/×3, *+4 brilliant energy unholy longspear*) and +23 melee (1d4+2, bite); SA fear aura, manipulate form, poison, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft., immunity to fire, spell resistance 20; AL LE; SV Fort +19, Ref +18, Will +24; Str 20, Dex 17, Con 22, Int 30, Wis 23, Cha 22.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +27, Bluff +29, Concentration +33, Craft (alchemy) +30, Decipher Script +27, Diplomacy +37, Heal +37, Intimidate +27, Knowledge (arcana) +37, Knowledge (history) +37, Knowledge (religion) +37, Knowledge (the planes) +20, Listen +20, Move Silently +20, Sense Motive +19, Spellcraft +41, Spot +25; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Magical Aptitude, Persuasive, Power Attack, Skill Focus (Heal).

Fear Aura (Su): As a free action, Pil'it'ith can create an aura of fear in a 10-foot radius. This effect is otherwise identical with the *fear* spell (caster level 14th; save DC 23). A creature that succeeds on the save cannot be affected again by Pil'it'ith's fear aura for 24 hours. Other sarrukh are immune to this aura.

Manipulate Form (Su): At will, Pil'it'ith can modify the form of any Scaled One native to Toril, except for aquatic and undead creatures. With a successful touch attack, he can cause one alteration of his choice in the target creature's body. The target falls unconscious for 2d4 rounds due to the shock of changing form. A successful DC 23 Fortitude negates both the change and the unconsciousness.

Pil'it'ith may use this ability to change a minor aspect of the target creature, such as the shape of its head or the color of its scales. He may also choose to make a much more significant alteration, such as converting limbs into tentacles, changing overall body shape (snake to humanoid, for example), or adding or removing an appendage. Any ability score may be decreased to a minimum of 1 or increased to a maximum equal to Pil'it'ith's corresponding score. Pil'it'ith may also grant the target an extraordinary ability or remove one from it.

The change bestowed takes effect immediately and is permanent. Furthermore, the alterations are automatically passed on to all the creature's offspring when it breeds with another of its unmodified kind.

Poison (Ex): Bite, injury, Fortitude DC 23; initial and secondary damage 1d6 temporary Con.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*disrupt undead, identify, invisibility, knock, magic missile, misdirection* (DC 18), *see invisibility, sleep* (DC 17); 2/day—*confusion* (DC 20), *fireball* (DC 19), *lightning bolt* (DC 19), *polymorph;* 1/day—*teleport* (DC 21), *wall of force.*

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/7+1/7+1/6+1/5+1/5+1/4+1/2+1/1+1; save DC 16 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic* (2), *mending, read magic;* 1st—*cure light wounds* (2), *deathwatch, detect good* (2), *doom* (2), *protection from good*;* 2nd—*cure moderate wounds* (2), *darkness* (2), *desecrate*, enthrall, spiritual weapon, zone of truth;* 3rd—*bestow curse, contagion, cure serious wounds, deeper darkness, dispel magic, invisibility purge, magic circle against good*;* 4th—*cure critical wounds, poison* (2), *restoration, tongues, unholy blight*;* 5th—*commune, dispel good*, mass cure light wounds* (2), *slay living, true seeing;* 6th—*create undead*, harm, heal, mass cure moderate wounds, word of recall;* 7th—*blasphemy*, mass cure serious wounds, repulsion;* 8th—*antimagic field, unholy aura*.*

*Domain spell. Deity: Set. Domains: Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), Scalykind (rebuke/command lizards and snakes 9/day).

Possessions: +4 unholy brilliant energy longspear, breastplate of command, ring of spell turning, helm of telepathy, bead of force, periapt of protection against poison, wings of flying.

PIL'IT'ITH'S CONSORTS

A yuan-ti slave who pleases Pil'it'ith in life continues to serve him in death as a dread wraith. Eight undead consorts currently haunt Pil'it'ith's royal chambers. These yuan-ti abominations look much like they did in life, except their forms are comprised entirely of hateful darkness.

Yuan-ti Dread Wraiths (8): CR 11; Large undead (incorporeal); HD 16d12; hp 104 each; Init +13; Spd fly 60 ft. (good); AC 25, touch 25, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +8; Grp —; Atk +16 melee (2d6 plus 1d8 Con, incorporeal touch); Full Atk +16 melee (2d6 plus 1d8 Con, incorporeal touch); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA Constitution drain, create spawn; SQ darkvision 60 ft., daylight powerlessness, incorporeal traits, lifesense 60 ft., undead traits, unnatural aura; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +14, Will +14; Str —, Dex 28, Con —, Int 17, Wis 18, Cha 24.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +9, Hide +24, Intimidate +26, Knowledge (religion) +22, Listen +25, Search +22, Sense Motive +23, Spot +25, Survival +4 (+6 following tracks); Alertness^{B}, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative^{B}, Improved Natural Attack (incorporeal touch), Mobility, Spring Attack.

Constitution Drain (Su): Living creatures hit by a dread wraith's incorporeal touch attack must succeed on a DC 25 Fortitude save or take 1d8 points of Constitution drain. On each successful attack, the dread wraith gains 5 temporary hit points.

Create Spawn (Su): Any humanoid or monstrous humanoid slain by a dread wraith becomes a wraith in 1d4 rounds. Spawn serve the wraith that created them and remain enslaved until destroyed. They do not retain any of the abilities they had in life.

Daylight Powerlessness (Ex): Dread wraiths are utterly powerless in natural sunlight (not merely a *daylight* spell) and flee from it.

Lifesense (Su): A dread wraith notices and locates living creatures within 60 feet, just as if it possessed the blindsight ability. It also senses the strength of their life force automatically, as if it had cast *deathwatch.*

Unnatural Aura (Su): Animals, whether wild or domesticated, can sense the unnatural presence of a dread wraith at a distance of 30 feet. They will not willingly approach nearer than that and panic if forced to do so; they remain panicked as long as they are within that range.

Monsters

The realms of the serpentfolk are home to all manner of monsters that crawl, slither, and swim through jungles, swamps, and subterranean depths.

CR	Monster
1/4	Muckdweller
1/2	Snake, reed
1	Mlarraun
2	Lizard king
2	Nifern
2	Snake, dung
2	Snake, glacier
2	Snake, sewerm
2	Snake, tree python
2	Snake, whipsnake
3	Dinosaur, pteranadon
3	Jaculi
3	Tren
5	Amphisbaena
5	Lycanthrope, wereserpent
7	Deathcoils
7	Dinosaur, ceratosaur
7	Dinosaur, stegosaurus
8	Naga, banelar
8	Naga, iridescent
8	Serpentflesh golem
8	Yuan-ti holy guardian
9	Yuan-ti mageslayer
15	Naga, bone (dark naga sorcerer 6)
18	Naga, nagahydra
21	Sarrukh
22	Naga, Faerûnian ha-naga

Amphisbaena

Large Magical Beast

Hit Dice: 6d10+12 (45 hp)

Initiative: +3

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft.

Armor Class: 17 (–1 size, +3 Dex, +5 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 14

Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+11

Attack: Bite +8 melee (1d6+1 plus poison)

Full Attack: 2 bites +8 melee (1d6+1 plus poison)

Space/Reach: 5 ft. (coiled)/10 ft.

Special Attacks: Poison

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., hardened corpse, immunity to cold, low-light vision, scent

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +3

Abilities: Str 13, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 3

Skills: Balance +15, Climb +11, Hide +6, Listen +13, Spot +13, Tumble +9

Feats: Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Weapon Finesse

Environment: Temperate marshes

Organization: Solitary

Challenge Rating: 5

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 7–9 HD (Large); 10–18 HD (Huge)

Level Adjustment: —

A creature that resembles a giant pit viper raises two heads, one at each end of its body. Small horns above each eye give it a diabolical appearance.

An amphisbaena is an aggressive pit viper about 13 feet long with a head at each end of its body. Small horns above each eye help the creature to rip the skin that bunches at its middle when it molts. The coloration of its scales is as varied as that of vipers.

Short distances are navigated with an odd sidewinding motion similar to that of many other snakes. The creature typically travels longer distances by retracting its fangs, grasping one of its necks with the other mouth, and rapidly rolling along like a hoop.

combat

An amphisbaena can attack with both its heads simultaneously, and each head may strike a separate target if desired. Moreover, an amphisbaena's two heads give it an advantage over normal snakes in that it can feed and defend against threats at the same time.

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude DC 15, initial and secondary damage 1d8 Constitution. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Hardened Corpse (Su): Just before death, an amphisbaena attempts to bite one head with the other. If it succeeds, its body turns to hardened stone upon death.

Skills: An amphisbaena has a +4 racial bonus on Hide and Tumble checks, a +8 racial bonus on Climb, Listen, and Spot checks, and a +12 racial bonus on Balance checks.

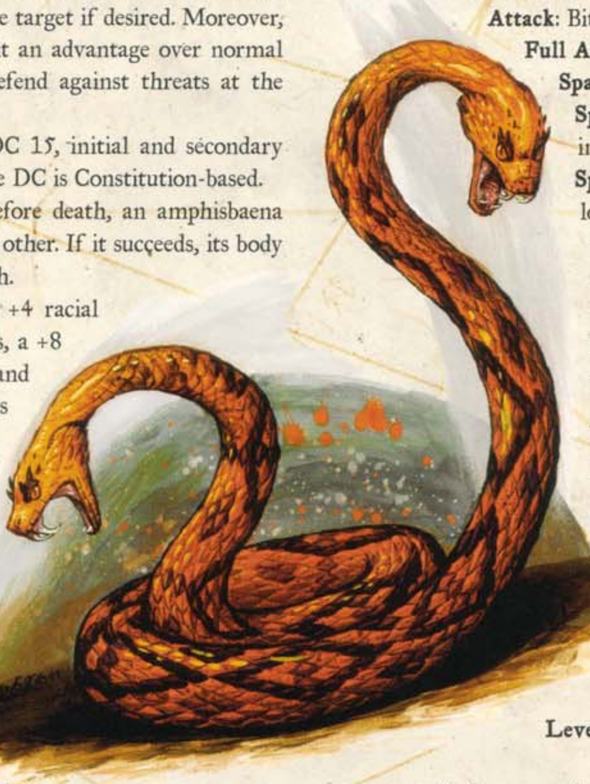
An amphisbaena can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

An amphisbaena can use either its Strength or its Dexterity modifier for Climb checks, whichever is better.

Feats: An amphisbaena's Combat Reflexes feat allows it to use both of its heads for attacks of opportunity each round.

in the Realms

In the Battledale town of Chariton, a clutch of amphisbaenae hatched some years ago. Finding the young somewhat docile, the citizens left them alone. But after hibernating and growing to immense proportions (as most specimens of the Ashaba strain do), the amphisbaenae devoured nearly all of the town's residents, leaving Chariton a ghost town. The amphisbaenae have since moved on to the forests near the Pool of Yeven, the Deeping Stream, and Lake Sember.



Amphisbaena

Illustration by Thom Baxa

Deathcoils

Huge Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 11d10+14 (74 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Armor Class: 15 (–2 size, +3 Dex, +4 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +11/+26
Attack: Bite +16 melee (1d8+10)
Full Attack: Bite +16 melee (1d8+10)
Space/Reach: 15 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d8+10, improved grab, poison breath
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +4
Abilities: Str 25, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills: Balance +17, Climb +17, Hide +10, Listen +12, Spot +12, Swim +17
Feats: Alertness, Endurance, Skill Focus (Hide), Toughness
Environment: Temperate forests
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement: 12–22 HD (Huge); 23–33 (Gargantuan)
Level Adjustment: —

An immense shape slithers through the branches that form a canopy over the forest floor. Its dark green form is nearly invisible against the leaves, but its serpentine eyes, unblinking and yellow, track its prey with cold precision.

Many horrific tales tell of a single deathcoils devouring an entire party of adventurers, one by one. This mighty constrictor snake likes to lurk on forest fringes, where wild herd animals stray from the plains to dine on tree foliage. The creature's ability to hibernate for months at a time enables it to survive even the coldest winters.

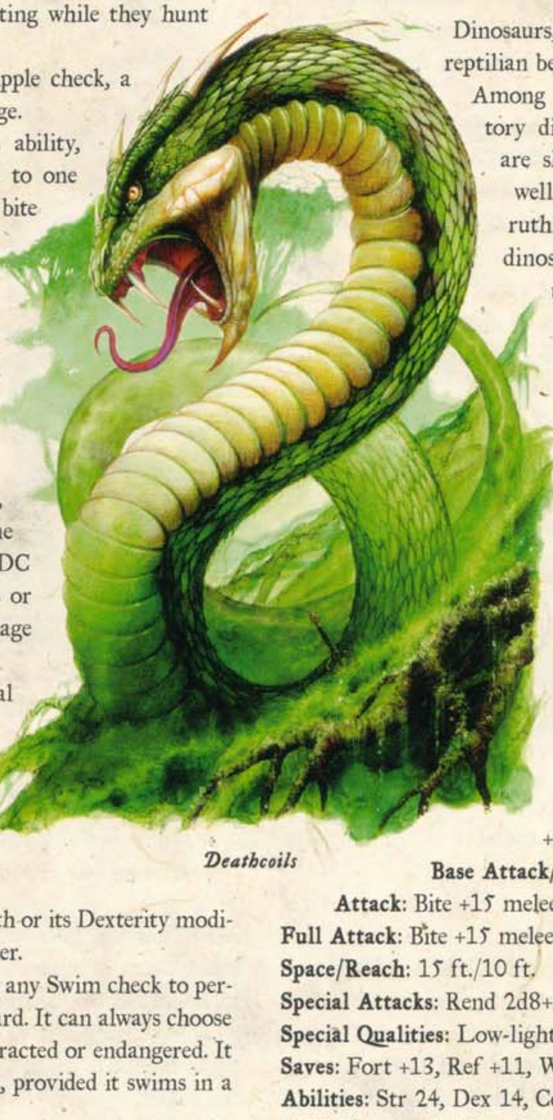
A deathcoils eats carrion, all other snakes, and fresh prey of all kinds. It even attacks its own kind on sight unless the opponent is clearly larger. The smaller deathcoils usually flees from such a confrontation, and the aggressor rarely pursues for long.

A deathcoils is a dark green, snakelike creature with round black and brown markings that help it hide in forest settings. It can grow up to 80 feet long.

combat

Deathcoils are aggressive, relentless hunters. Those that live near water often drag their prey underwater to drown it. They usually save their breath weapons for defense against numerous foes, or to slay formidable opponents.

Deathcoils have the intelligence to plan ambushes, and they often collect treasure from victims and scatter it near a cave or a good ambush area to lure prey off a trail. They have also been known to drive animals into ravines and over precipices, then leave their broken bodies for later feasting while they hunt other creatures.



Deathcoils

Illustration by Wayne England

Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a deathcoils deals 1d8+10 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a deathcoils must hit an opponent up to one size category larger than itself with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict. A deathcoils often drags grabbed prey underwater to drown (see page 304 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Poison Breath (Ex): Twice per day, a deathcoils can breathe a 60-foot cone of poisonous gas (inhaled, Fortitude DC 16, initial damage sleep for 2d4 hours or until damage is taken, secondary damage 1d6 Con).

Skills: A deathcoils gains a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, and Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus on Balance and Climb checks.

A deathcoils can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

A deathcoils can use either its Strength or its Dexterity modifier for Climb checks, whichever is higher.

A deathcoils has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

In the Realms

Known in forests all over Faerûn, the deathcoils is a legendary foe. Tales credit it with more intelligence than it really possesses, but deathcoils have deliberately sunk boats on forest rivers and pinned them down with boulders so as to create a larder of drowned victims for later dining. They commonly chase foes that have eluded or wounded them for miles, and they often leave forests by night to attack nearby penned herds of livestock.

Certain pieces of furniture owned by Calishite satraps (and royalty across Faerûn) are covered in deathcoils skin, which retains its supple sheen for centuries—though its scales are both hard and slippery. Deathcoils blood is a secret ingredient of the yuan-ti osssra (see Chapter 10) known as duthlah'hass.

Dinosaur

Dinosaurs, or terrible lizards, are ancient reptilian beasts that may be related to dragons. Among the traits that the typical predatory dinosaur shares with many dragons are sharp teeth, a savage disposition, a well-developed sense of territory, and a ruthless drive to hunt. The herbivorous dinosaurs are not usually aggressive unless wounded or defending their young, but may attack if startled or harassed.

Dinosaurs most often live in rugged or isolated areas that humanoids seldom visit: remote mountain valleys, inaccessible plateaus, tropical islands, and the densest jungles.

Ceratosaur

Huge Animal

Hit Dice: 14d8+59 (122 hp)

Initiative: +6

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armor Class: 15 (–2 size, +2 Dex, +5 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +10/+25

Attack: Bite +15 melee (4d8+10)

Full Attack: Bite +15 melee (4d8+10)

Space/Reach: 15 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Rend 2d8+10

Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent

Saves: Fort +13, Ref +11, Will +6

Abilities: Str 24, Dex 14, Con 18, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 10

Skills: Listen +9, Move Silently +8, Spot +10

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative, Run, Toughness, Track

Environment: Warm forests

Organization: Solitary or pair

Challenge Rating: 7

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always neutral

Advancement: 15–28 HD (Huge), 29–42 HD (Gargantuan)

Level Adjustment: —

This massive predator's body displays its incredible strength. Turning its head on its S-shaped neck, the creature peers through the underbrush in search of prey.

The ceratosaur derives all its nourishment from meat. When hungry, this massive predator is the bane of any creatures in its way.

Measuring between 24 and 30 feet from nose to tail, the ceratosaur walks on two strong legs and has a bulky body, heavy bones, and a massive tail. Its strong, serpentine neck supports a lizardlike head with a short horn protruding from its snout. Its eyes are large, and it has two short brow ridges plus several bony knobs above its eyes and on the top of its head. Its arms are short, ending in four-fingered hands.

Combat

The ceratosaur is not subtle in combat. It tries to catch prey by surprise, then relies on its speed and its powerful jaws to make the kill. If a pair of ceratosaurs is hunting together, one usually makes its presence known, causing prey to bolt into the waiting clutches of its partner.

Rend (Ex): A ceratosaur that wins a grapple check after a successful bite attack establishes a hold, latching onto the opponent's body and shaking it to tear the flesh. This attack automatically deals 2d8+10 points of damage.

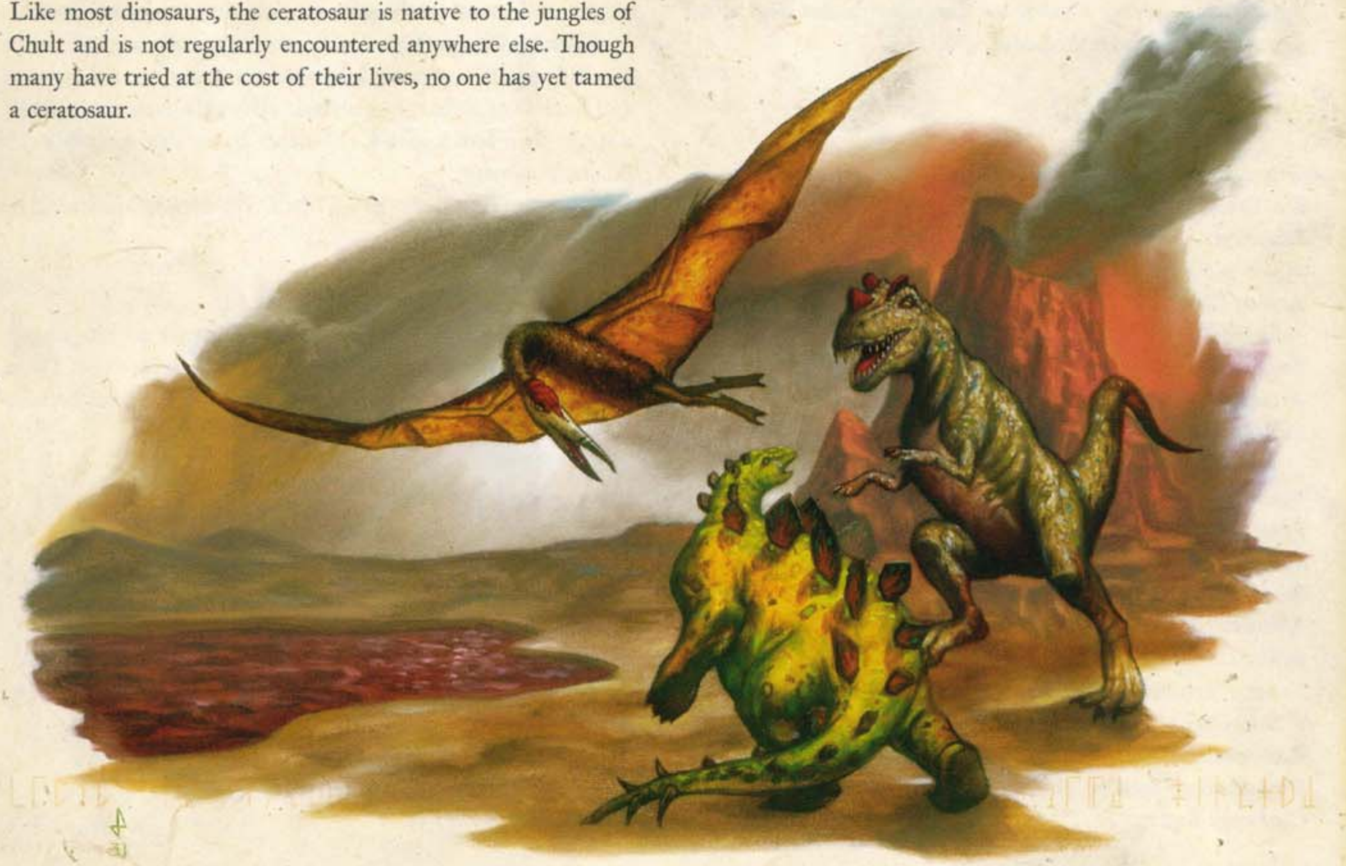
In the Realms

Like most dinosaurs, the ceratosaur is native to the jungles of Chult and is not regularly encountered anywhere else. Though many have tried at the cost of their lives, no one has yet tamed a ceratosaur.

Pteranadon

Large Animal
Hit Dice: 3d8+9 (22 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 80 ft. (average)
Armor Class: 15 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 13
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+10
Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d8+6)
Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d8+6)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: —
Special Qualities: Low-light vision
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +3
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 15, Cha 11
Skills: Listen +4, Spot +6
Feats: Alertness, Flyby Attack
Environment: Warm hills
Organization: Solitary, pair, or flock (3–12)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 6–10 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: —

Illustration by Jim Pavelec



Pteranadon, stegosaurus, ceratosaur

This large, birdlike reptile has a long, toothy beak, a thin headcrest, sharp talons, and small claws at the joints of its leathery wings. Its eyes are large and yellow, and its scaly skin sprouts small tufts of downy feathers.

Pteranadons are large pterosaurs occasionally used as flying mounts.

COMBAT

Pteranadons are fishers, used to hunting their prey on the wing. They do not generally like to fly into a raging melee on the ground, but are more comfortable in the swoops and dives of aerial combat with other flying creatures or mounts.

Carrying Capacity: A light load for a pteranadon is up to 300 pounds; a medium load, 301–600 pounds; and a heavy load, 601–900 pounds. A pteranadon can drag 4,500 pounds.

IN THE REALMS

Like most dinosaurs, the pteranadon is native to the jungles of Chult and is not regularly encountered anywhere else. Some of the more powerful creatures of Chult train pteranadons to actively hunt those who would intrude on their territory.

TRAINING A PTERANADON

Training a pteranadon to bear a rider requires six weeks of work and a DC 25 Handle Animal check, and an exotic saddle is needed to balance upon the creature's back. A pteranadon can fight while carrying a rider, but the rider cannot also attack unless a Ride check is successful.

Stegosaurus

Gargantuan Animal
Hit Dice: 18d10+183 (264 hp)
Initiative: –2
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
Armor Class: 14 (–2 Dex, –4 size, +10 natural), touch 4, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +13/+33
Attack: Slam +17 melee (2d6+8)
Full Attack: 2 slams +17 melee (2d6+8) and tail slap +12 melee (4d6+12)
Space/Reach: 30 ft. (long)/10 ft.
Special Attacks: Powerful charge, trample 2d6+12
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +23, Ref +9, Will +8
Abilities: Str 27, Dex 7, Con 30, Int 1, Wis 14, Cha 10
Skills: Listen +14, Spot +18
Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Run, Skill Focus (Spot), Toughness
Environment: Warm plains
Organization: Solitary, pair, or herd (5–8)
Challenge Rating: 7
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 19–36 HD (Gargantuan), 37–54 HD (Colossal)

This immense creature walks on four short but massive legs. Two rows of bony plates line its back, and its tail is covered in long, bony spikes. Its head is relatively small, and its mouth ends in a powerful beak.

The stegosaurus is an immense yet stupid herbivore often found in the plains and jungles, where it feasts on grasses, plants, and leaves. These creatures are most often encountered in herds, which are vicious enough as a group that only the most brazen predators dare attack them.

The stegosaurus has a small head and a tiny brain. Its mouth is a powerful beak, and its thick legs end in round feet studded with hooflike claws. Its hind legs are longer and stronger than its front ones, allowing it to rear up to get at leaves high above the ground. The two rows of bony, leaf-shaped plates along its neck, back, and tail are used for the collection and dispersion of heat. These plates give way to vicious spikes at the end of an unusually muscular tail.

COMBAT

The stegosaurus is by and large a peaceful animal, but it is quick to defend itself from predators and hunters. When threatened, it uses its two front hooves to kick opponents while swinging its mighty tail about, catching its enemies with the vicious spikes.

Powerful Charge (Ex): A stegosaurus typically begins a battle by charging at its opponent. In addition to the normal benefits and hazards of a charge, this tactic allows the creature to make a single slam attack with a +17 attack bonus that deals 4d8+12 points of damage.

Trample (Ex): Reflex DC 27 half. The save DC is Strength-based.

IN THE REALMS

Like most dinosaurs, the stegosaurus is native to the jungles of Chult and is not regularly encountered anywhere else. These fearsome creatures are hunted by many jungle creatures because they provide an abundant source of meat.

Jaculi

Medium Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 6d10+15 (48 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 30 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+9
Attack: Bite +9 melee (1d6+4)
Full Attack: Bite +9 melee (1d6+4)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: *Animal trance,* constrict 1d8+4, flying gore, improved grab

Special Qualities: *Chameleon power,* darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent, spring

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +8, Will +3

Abilities: Str 17, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 2

Skills: Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +10, Jump +20, Listen +10, Spot +10, Swim +11

Feats: Alertness, Power Attack, Toughness

Environment: Warm forests

Organization: Solitary or coil (4–40)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: —

Alignment: Always chaotic evil

Advancement: 7–12 HD (Large)

Level Adjustment: —

A flash of purple through the leaves and a faint hiss reveal the presence of a reptilian predator. Its serpentine eyes flash with uncanny intelligence.

Illustration by Thomas Baxa

Although the name jaculi is sometimes used as a collective term for tree-dwelling snakes (including the boomslang and the emerald tree boa), the jaculi of Faerûn is a particular kind of creature.

A jaculi looks like a snake with mauve to dark purple scales. Its bony, arrowhead-shaped head is studded with stubby but sharp parallel horns that point straight forward toward its nose.

combat

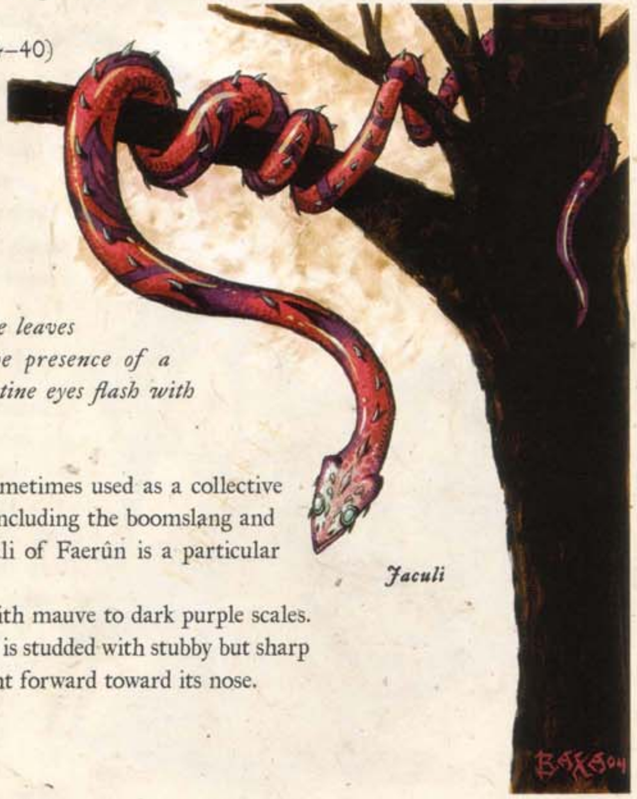
Jaculis are intelligent hunters that never forget past experiences. They are wise enough to attack isolated creatures, avoid falling onto pointed objects or obvious weapons, and seek out sleeping prey. A jaculi typically uses its *animal trance* ability to lure small birds or furred forest creatures into a nest or den, then slithers inside and uses its body to block the exit.

Against formidable foes, a jaculi begins combat by launching itself from a high spot (a tree branch or even the roof of a building) for a flying gore attack. Should it face attacks from more than a single foe—or a hard fight from its chosen victim—it springs to the nearest tree and climbs out of reach. If pursued, it jumps from tree to tree to get away, seeking a place to hide, then turns and follows its foes unseen, attacking again when conditions are advantageous.

Jaculis usually swallow small prey whole, but they can also bite and chew, savaging prey too large to swallow. Unless they are starving, they eat only prey they have killed themselves less than two days ago. When feeding hungry young, a jaculi sometimes slays a large beast and hides in or under the corpse to await vultures and other carrion-feeders, which it slays as well.

***Animal Trance* (Sp)**: Once per day, a jaculi can sway in place and flash its eyes to hold its prey motionless. This psionic ability works like the spell of the same name (caster level 12th; save DC 9).

Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a jaculi deals 1d8+4 points of damage.



Jaculi

Flying Gore (Ex): A jaculi can hurl itself down on an opponent like an arrow from a point 30 feet or more above. This flying gore attack (+10 melee) deals 1d8+6 points of piercing damage from the jaculi's horns and does not provoke attacks of opportunity.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a jaculi must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict. If it takes 10 or more points of damage, it flees to seek easier prey.

***Chameleon Power* (Sp)**: At will, a jaculi can psionically change the coloration of its body as a standard action to match its surroundings, gaining a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

Spring (Ex): A jaculi can gather its coils and then launch itself in a jump. The Jump DCs for both long jumps and high jumps are halved, and no running start is required. Furthermore, when jumping down, the jaculi takes damage as if it had dropped 70 fewer feet than it actually did.

Skills: A jaculi has a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, and Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus on Balance, Climb, and Jump checks.

A jaculi can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

A jaculi uses either its Strength modifier or its Dexterity modifier for Climb checks, whichever is higher.

A jaculi has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

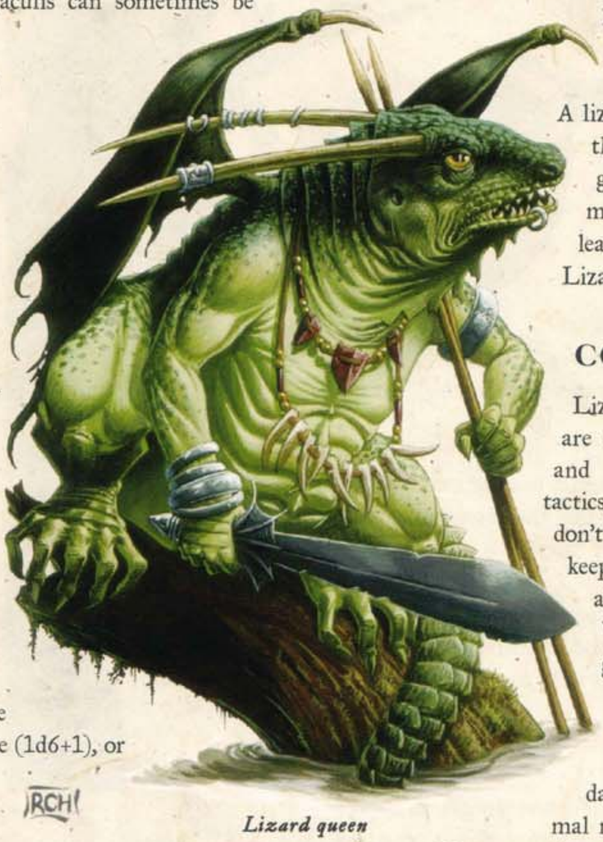
In the Realms

Jaculis inhabit all of Faerûn except arctic and subarctic areas. They can roam for miles while hunting, but they usually hunt in favorite areas that they have come to know well, moving on only when food becomes scarce. Jaculis aren't territorial; they ignore others of their kind except in the spring, when they mate.

Jaculis have very long lifespans and sometimes form wary alliances with long-lived creatures that they know they cannot defeat. With the aid of magic, jaculis can sometimes be trained as guardians.

Lizard King/Queen

Medium Outsider (Native)
Hit Dice: 2d8+4 (13 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), fly 30 ft. (average)
Armor Class: 20 (+2 Dex, +6 natural, +2 heavy shield), touch 12, flat-footed 18
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+4
Attack: Claw +4 melee (1d4+3), or short sword +4 melee (1d6+3/19–20), or javelin +3 ranged (1d6+3)
Full Attack: 2 claws +4 melee (1d4+3) and bite +2 melee (1d6+1), or short sword +4 melee (1d6+3/19–20) and bite +2 melee (1d6+1), or javelin +3 ranged (1d6+3)
Special Attacks: Smite good, spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: Damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., hold breath, immunity to poison, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10, spell resistance 12
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +0
Abilities: Str 17, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 12
Skills: Balance +9, Bluff +3, Diplomacy +3, Hide +2, Intimidate +3, Jump +10, Knowledge (the planes) +3, Listen +2, Move Silently +2, Search +2, Swim +8
Feats: Multiattack
Environment: Temperate marshes
Organization: Solitary or tribe (1 plus 2 lizardfolk lieutenants of 3rd–6th level and 30–60 lizardfolk)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: By class
Level Adjustment: +5



Lizard queen

This humanoid creature is covered in dark green scales. Menacing red eyes gleam from its head, and black, batlike wings sprout from its back. Long, sleek horns that begin at its browline are swept back behind its head.

Lizard kings (or lizard queens, as the females are called) result from breeding demons with lizardfolk. When a lizard king breeds with other lizardfolk, about 20% of the offspring are lizard kings; the rest are ordinary lizardfolk. When the young lizard kings in a tribe reach adulthood, all but the strongest are sacrificed.

A lizard king resembles a lizardfolk, although its scales are a darker shade of green, and it always has distinct demonic features. A typical lizard king leads its own tribe of lizardfolk.

Lizard kings speak Draconic.

Combat

Lizardfolk tribes ruled by lizard kings are more advanced than other tribes, and they typically use sophisticated tactics, ambushes, and traps. Lizard kings don't shy away from battle, but they keep their fiercest warriors nearby and almost never enter combat alone. While most lizardfolk are disorganized in combat, those led by a lizard king stand by their ruler at all costs.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day, a lizard king can make a normal melee attack to deal 2 extra points of damage against a good foe.

Spell-Like Abilities: *Darkness* 3/day. Caster level 2nd.

Hold Breath: A lizard king can hold its breath for a number of rounds equal to four times its Constitution score before it risks drowning (see page 304 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Skills: Because of its tail, a lizard king has a +4 racial bonus on Balance, Jump, and Swim checks. The skill modifiers given in the statistics block include a –2 armor check penalty (–4 on Swim checks) for carrying a heavy shield.

Note: A lizard king is simply a lizardfolk with the half-fiend template applied. A lizard king with class levels gains additional spell-like abilities and special qualities as a half-fiend of the same character level would.

In the Realms

Lizard kings are the direct results of the war between the sarrukh and the khaastas. The demon lord Sess'innek sent his demonic legions to Faerûn to control the lizardfolk, hoping to weaken the sarrukh's base of support on their homeworld.

The war dragged on for centuries, and the demons were eventually recalled to the Barrens of Doom and Despair, leaving their offspring, the lizard kings, to rule in their stead.

Only four out of ten lizardfolk tribes are ruled by lizard kings today. Such tribes are highly aggressive, often warring with civilized settlements as well as other lizardfolk, though they almost never battle other tribes under the control of lizard kings. While lizardfolk are normally not evil, those tribes under the leadership of lizard kings are.

Lycanthrope, Wereserpent

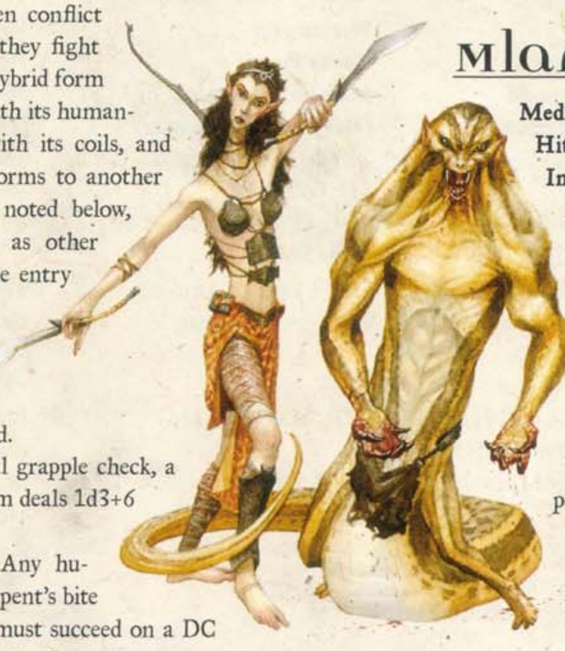
A wereserpent is a humanoid or giant that can transform itself into a snake form and a hybrid snake-human form. Its bite can afflict other humanoids or giants with this kind of lycanthropy. Wereserpents prefer to bite and chew their prey rather than swallowing creatures whole.

	Wereserpent **Human Form** **Medium Humanoid** **(Human, Shapechanger)**	**Wereserpent** **Snake Form** **Medium Humanoid** **(Human, Shapechanger)**	**Wereserpent** **Hybrid Form** **Medium Humanoid** **(Human, Shapechanger)**
Hit Dice:	1d8+1 plus 3d8+6 plus 3 (28 hp)	1d8+1 plus 3d8+6 plus 3 (28 hp)	1d8+1 plus 3d8+6 plus 3 (28 hp)
Initiative:	+5	+8	+8
Speed:	20 ft. in breastplate (4 squares); base speed 30 ft.	20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.	30 ft. (6 squares)
Armor Class:	18 (+1 Dex, +2 natural, +5 breastplate), touch 11, flat-footed 17	18 (+4 Dex, +4 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 14	18 (+4 Dex, +4 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple:	+3/+4	+3/+7	+3/+7
Attack:	Glaive +4 melee (1d10+1/×3) or composite longbow (+1 Str bonus) +4 ranged (1d8+1/×3)	Bite +7 melee (1d3+6)	Claw + 7 melee (1d4+4) or glaive +7 melee (1d10+6/×3) or composite longbow (+1 Str bonus) +7 ranged (1d8+1/×3)
Full Attack:	Glaive +4 melee (1d10+1/×3) or composite longbow (+1 Str bonus) +4 ranged (1d8+1/×3)	Bite +7 melee (1d3+6)	2 claws + 7 melee (1d4+4) and bite +2 melee (1d3+2) or glaive +7 melee or (1d10+6/×3) and bite +2 melee (1d3+2) composite longbow (+1 Str bonus) +7 ranged (1d8+1/×3)
Space/Reach:	5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with glaive)	5 ft./5 ft.	5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with glaive)
Special Attacks:	—	Constrict 1d3+6, curse of lycanthropy, improved grab	Constrict 1d3+6, curse of lycanthropy, improved grab
Special Qualities:	Alternate form, low-light vision, scent, serpent empathy	Alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver, low-light vision, scent, serpent empathy	Alternate form, damage reduction, 10/silver, low-light vision, scent, serpent empathy
Saves:	Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +1	Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +1	Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +1
Abilities:	Str 13, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8	Str 19, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8	Str 19, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8
Skills:	Balance +5, Climb +9, Handle Animal +3, Hide +2, Listen +10, Spot +10, Swim –3	Balance +12, Climb +16, Handle Animal +3, Hide +9, Listen +10, Spot +10, Swim +16	Balance +12, Climb +16, Handle Animal +3, Hide +9, Listen +10, Spot +10, Swim +16
Feats:	Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Iron Will^{B}, Toughness^{B}	Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Iron Will^{B}, Toughness^{B}	Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Iron Will^{B}, Toughness^{B}
Environment:	Warm forests	Warm forests	Warm forests
Organization:	Solitary, pair, family (3–4)	(same as human form)	(same as human form)
Challenge Rating:	3	3	3
Treasure:	Standard	Standard	Standard
Alignment:	Usually chaotic evil	Usually chaotic evil	Usually chaotic evil
Advancement:	By character class	By character class	By character class
Level Adjustment:	+3	+3	+3

In humanoid form, a wereserpent is slender, fine-featured, and lithe, moving as fluidly as an elf dancer. It typically has dark eyes and hair and dresses in skin-revealing clothing with large openings. A wereserpent usually does not have body piercings, and it avoids jewelry that's affixed to the body rather than to garments.

combat

Wereserpents in human form tend to fight with knives or spells, usually as a last resort when open conflict can't be avoided. In snake form, they fight as constrictors. A wereserpent in hybrid form can cast spells or wield weapons with its humanoid arms and hands, constrict with its coils, and bite. Changing from any of its forms to another is a standard action. Except as noted below, wereserpents function the same as other lycanthropes (see the Lycanthrope entry in the *Monster Manual*).



Wereserpents

Alternate Form (Su): A wereserpent can assume the form of a Medium constrictor snake or a snake-human hybrid.

Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a wereserpent in snake or hybrid form deals 1d3+6 points of damage.

Curse of Lycanthropy (Su): Any humanoid or giant hit by the wereserpent's bite attack in animal or hybrid form must succeed on a DC 15 Fortitude saving throw or contract lycanthropy.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a wereserpent must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Serpent Empathy (Ex): Communicate with serpents and serpentfolk, and +4 racial bonus on Charisma-based checks against serpents and serpentfolk.

The wereserpent presented here is based on a 1st-level human warrior who is a natural lycanthrope, using the following base ability scores: Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

in the Realms

Wereserpents can be found anywhere in Faerûn, although they hide their natures as much as possible. They're particularly common around established yuan-ti settlements where snake and human breeding experiments have been going on for centuries, and in cities (especially tropical ports) where yuan-ti slavers and agents operate.

Many wereserpents of Faerûn are rogues or arcane spellcasters, and most of them hate nagas and yuan-ti (but not snakes). Wereserpents that can cast arcane spells tend to be either solitary stalkers and slayers of yuan-ti or—very rarely—friends or allies of the Coiled Cabal (see Chapter 1).

At least one fallen noble family of Tethyr consists entirely of wereserpents. The Janor clan, whose members are now scattered up and down the Sword Coast, crave obscurity despite their success as merchants, and they use a variety of false names and guises to protect the family secret.

Mlarraun

Medium Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 2d10 (11 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 13
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+1
Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d4–1 plus poison) or spit +5 ranged touch (poison)
Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d4–1 plus poison) or spit +5 ranged touch (poison)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent, stone torpor
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +1
Abilities: Str 8, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills: Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +12, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +7
Feats: Weapon Finesse
Environment: Warm plains
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —
Level Adjustment: —

A thin, triangular, scaled head peers out of the underbrush, watching for prey.

The "spitting snakes" of Realmslore are common just west of the Nagawater, on the plains known locally as Serpents' Holding. They spend their days sleeping, sunning, or hunting. When the opportunity presents itself, a mlarraun may slay several herd beasts or other large creatures at once and leave them as ready food. Mlarrauns eat rotting carrion as readily as they do fresh

Illustration by Jeremy Jarvis

meat, and they suffer no ill effects from ingesting flesh tainted with their own poison.

Mlarrauns are best known for their ability to assume a stone-like form as a kind of torpor when targeted by spells or magical effects. These "stone snakes" are often placed as traps by yuan-ti and other Scaled Ones.

A mlarraun resembles a dark brown or black serpent with an arrowhead-shaped head.

combat

Though mlarrauns are quite effective at stalking their prey, they are neither cunning nor capable of anticipating danger. Many are trampled by the hooves of beasts that are unaware of their presence.

Poison (Ex): Bite or spit, injury or contact, Fortitude DC 11, initial damage blindness 2d6 hours, secondary damage blindness 4d6 hours and 1d4 points of damage. The poison need not touch the eyes to cause blindness.

Stone Torpor (Su): Any spell or magical effect that specifically targets a mlarraun causes it to instantly lapse into a torpor that lasts for 1d100 days. Its scales become hard and gray, though its body remains flexible. Contact with magic weapons or other magic items that do not specifically target the mlarraun does not trigger this change.

While in this state, the mlarraun can be posed by manually adjusting its body. Enterprising artisans and trap designers sometimes shape the creature into handles for chests, ornamental "scrollwork," and the like. Such adjustments do not wake the mlarraun. In this form, the creature's natural armor bonus rises to +10.

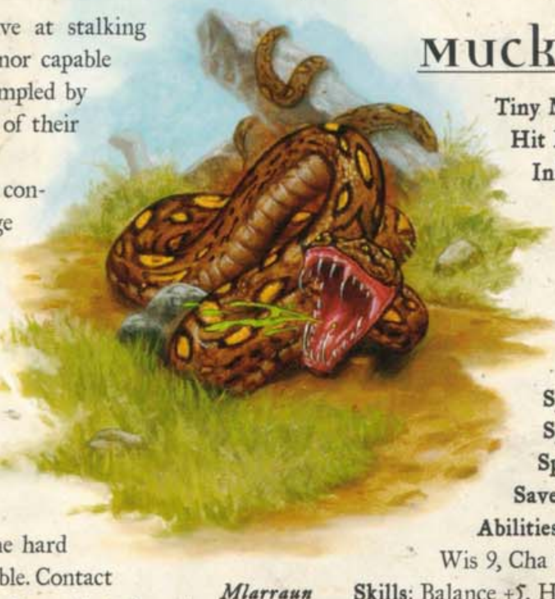
Damage in excess of one-half its original hit points awakens the mlarraun instantly, as does any spell that targets it. When it awakens, naturally or by other means, it bites or spits poison at the nearest creature.

Skills: A mlarraun has a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, and Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus on Balance and Climb checks.

A mlarraun can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

A mlarraun uses either its Strength modifier or its Dexterity modifier for Climb checks, whichever is higher.

A mlarraun has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.



Mlarraun

Illustration by Jim Pavelec

In the Realms

Mlarrauns are most numerous in the open lands south of the Sea of Fallen Stars, but they have been carried elsewhere by humans both as curiosities and for alchemical purposes. In earlier centuries, merchants often sold them as ornaments and even toys, unaware that they could revive.

A few clients have hired adventurers to capture stone snakes for use in traps against thieves or as deadly gifts for foes. Little use has been made of them for this purpose, however, since their periods of torpor can vary considerably.

Muckdweller

Tiny Monstrous Humanoid
Hit Dice: 1/4 d8 (1 hp)
Initiative: +7
Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), swim 20 ft.
Armor Class: 18 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple: +0/–11
Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d3–3)
Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d3–3)
Space/Reach: 2-1/2 ft./ 0 ft.
Special Attacks: Squirt
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities: Str 4, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8
Skills: Balance +5, Hide +13, Listen +1, Spot +1, Swim +11
Feats: Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse^B
Environment: Temperate marshes
Organization: Solitary or pack (5–20)
Challenge Rating: 1/4
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement: 1–2 HD (Tiny); 3 HD (Small)
Level Adjustment: +0

A rustling in the marsh weeds briefly reveals itself as a bipedal creature that resembles an upright Gila monster. It waddles forward on partially webbed rear feet, then darts back into the undergrowth, its mottled hide blending with the grasses.

Muckdwellers are bipedal amphibians that dwell in swamps, marshes, and mud-bottomed bodies of still water. Many serve kuo-toa or lizardfolk tribes, surviving on the periphery of such societies and venerating their gods.

Muckdwellers are omnivorous, but they prefer fresh, warm meat to plants, insects, and aquatic animals. They dwell below the water but maintain muddy, above-water areas for resting, eating, and hoarding shiny objects. Though they are not tool users, they do occasionally build rafts of reeds, twigs, and mud on which to float and hunt, as well as shelters where they can hide from predators. Muckdwellers hibernate during the winter months in temperate or colder climes.

A muckdweller looks like a miniature bipedal dinosaur with mottled gray and brown scales and a pale yellow underbelly. Its short tail is used for balancing and swimming. It has partially webbed rear feet and small, weak, prehensile foreclaws.

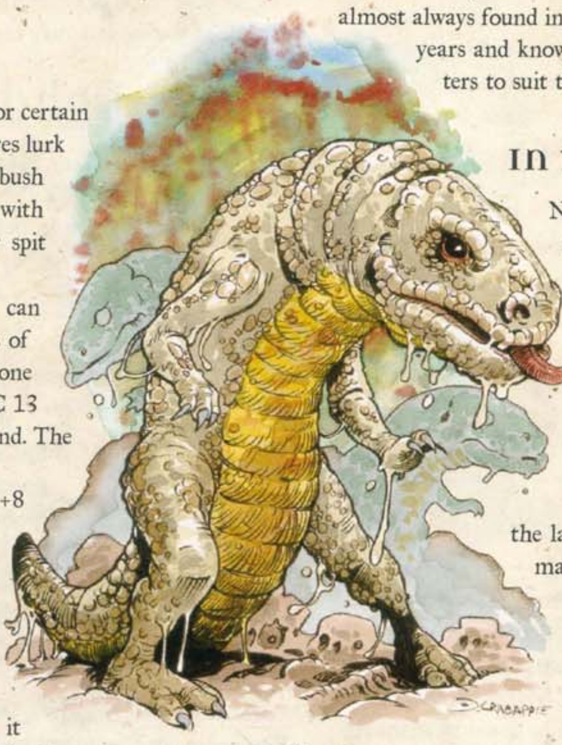
Muckdwellers speak Draconic.

combat

Muckdwellers flee unless cornered or certain of an easy kill. Packs of the creatures lurk below the waterline, waiting in ambush for potential prey. Before closing with a foe, muckdwellers employ their spit attacks to blind their opponents.

Squirt (Ex): A muckdweller can squirt a jet of water into the eyes of a target up to 25 feet away. Anyone hit by this attack must make a DC 13 Reflex save or be blinded for 1 round. The save DC is Dexterity-based.

Skills: A muckdweller has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line. A muckdweller uses its Dexterity bonus instead of its Strength bonus for Swim checks.



Muckdweller

Illustration by Dennis Crabapple

In the Realms

Muckdwellers live in the shadow of lizardfolk tribes across Faerûn, from the Mere of Dead Men to the Great Swamp of Rethild, and from the Lizard Marsh to the Surmarsh. The lizardfolk of Kalran in the northern Serpent Hills keep a large number of muckdwellers as slaves. The creatures are also prevalent in the subterranean cities of the kuo-toa, including Gathgoolgapool, beneath the heart of the Chultan Peninsula.

Naga

Nagas are highly intelligent and independent creatures with a variety of magical powers. They are the masters of all they survey, and their subtle wards and clever traps keep most intruders from disturbing their peace.

A nagas has a long, snakelike body covered with glistening scales and a more or less human face. It ranges in length from 10 to 20 feet and weighs between 200 and 500 pounds. The eyes of a naga are bright and intelligent—burning with an almost hypnotic inner light.

combat

Nagas favor spells over other forms of combat. Because they are almost always found in places that they have guarded for many years and know well, they can usually arrange encounters to suit their wishes.

In the Realms

Nagas of every subspecies are found across the length and breadth of Faerûn. Most favor ancient ruins of long-fallen empires as lairs. Dark nagas are most common in the Serpent Hills and the Dalelands region, whereas guardian nagas favor lost ruins along the Sword Coast and the northern shore of the Shining Sea. Spirit nagas inhabit marshes in the lands around the Sea of Fallen Stars and mangrove swamps on the Chultan Peninsula. Large numbers of water nagas lair in the depths of the Nagaflow and the Nagawater. The distribution of the lesser-known naga races is discussed in their entries below.

Banelar Naga

Huge Aberration

Hit Dice: 7d8+35 (66 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), swim 30 ft.

Armor Class: 14 (–2 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 13

Base Attack/Grapple: +5/+21

Attack: Sting +11 melee (2d6+8 plus poison)

Full Attack: Sting +11 melee (2d6+8 plus poison) and bite +6 melee (1d8+4 plus poison)

Space/Reach: 20 ft./10 ft.

Special Attacks: Poison, spells

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 2, immunity to acid and poison, magic items, resist petrification

Saves: Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +8

Abilities: Str 26, Dex 13, Con 21, Int 17, Wis 16, Cha 16

Skills: Bluff +8, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +3 (+5 acting), Intimidate +10, Listen +8, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +12 (+14 deciphering scrolls), Spot +8, Swim +16, Use Magic Device +12 (+14 scrolls)

Feats: Combat Casting, Eschew Materials^B, Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (enchantment)

Environment: Temperate aquatic

Organization: Solitary, pair, or nest (3–4)

Challenge Rating: 8

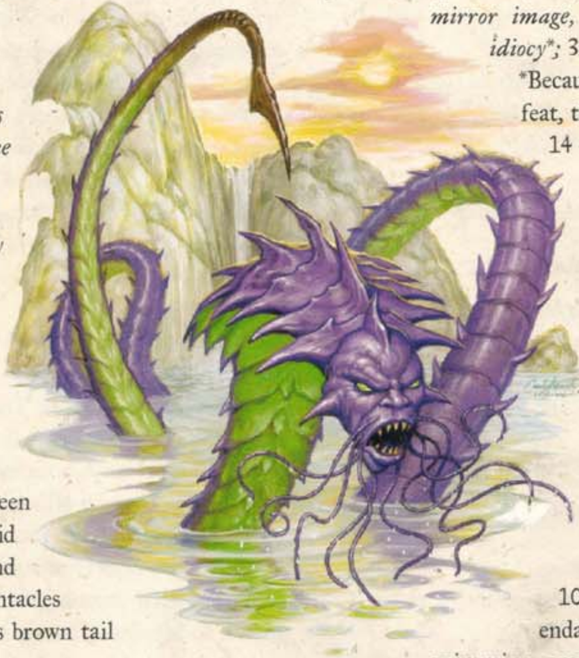
Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually lawful evil

Advancement: 8–14 HD (Huge); 15–21 HD (Gargantuan)

Level Adjustment: —

The slither of scales accompanies a flash of purple as a large snake slides over the ruined stones. Its hideous head bears a mockery of a human face, its mouth ringed by tiny, wormlike growths.



Banelar naga

Illustration by Carl Frank

Banelar nagas are evil, nagalike creatures whose mastery of spells and magic items makes them deadly opponents.

A banelar naga has a snakelike body covered in dark, purple-green scales and an oversized humanoid head. Its eyes are green-white and glistening with malice, and tiny tentacles grow in a ring about its mouth. Its brown tail ends in a wicked-looking stinger.

Although its tentacles are too weak to wield weapons, they can be used to wear, manipulate, or carry minor items such as rings, keys, wands, and bits of food. Banelar nagas can breathe air or water with equal ease.

Banelar nagas speak Common, Draconic, and Orc with their horrid, hissing voices.

COMBAT

A banelar attacks with its bite and the stinger at the end of its tail, both of which inject venom. In addition, the creature can choose from a wide rage of magical abilities to complement these attacks.

Poison (Ex): Bite or sting, injury or contact, Fortitude DC 18, initial damage 2d4 Con, secondary damage unconsciousness for 1d3 hours. As a side effect of the poison, the victim's skin turns blue around the wound until the secondary damage ends. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spells: A banelar casts spells as a 6th-level cleric with access to the Evil, Magic, and Water domains and as a 6th-level wizard. It can cast a single spell every round as a free action while attacking.

Typical Cleric Spells Prepared (5/4+1/4+1/3+1; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, detect poison, light, purify food and drink, resistance;* 1st—*bane, cure light wounds, command*, divine favor, protection from good;* 2nd—*aid, darkness, fog cloud, owl's wisdom, resist energy;* 3rd—*cure serious wounds, dispel magic, magic circle against good, protection from energy.*

Typical Wizard Spells Prepared (4/4/4/3; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*acid splash, daze*, mage hand, open/close;* 1st—*charm person*, mage armor, magic missile, shield;* 2nd—*fox's cunning, mirror image, Tasha's hideous laughter*, touch of idiocy*;* 3rd—*haste, lightning bolt, suggestion*.*

*Because of the Spell Focus (enchantment) feat, the DC for saves against these spells is 14 + spell level.

Magic Items: Banelar nagas collect magic items and use them freely. Their tentacles can wear or manipulate amulets, rings, wands, rods, potions, and similar small items.

Resist Petrification (Ex): A banelar gains a +3 racial bonus on saving throws made to resist petrification.

Skills: A banelar has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

IN THE REALMS

Though named for the many alliances they have made with priests of Bane, these monsters worked with the church of Cyric during the fourteen years when Bane was dead. Upon the return of the Black Lord, some banelar nagas decided to continue their allegiance to the Dark Sun, while others returned to their former alliance with the church of Bane. Two prominent Cyricist temples in Faerûn, the Twin Towers of the Eternal Eclipse in Amn and the House of Cyric in Skullport, have banelar allies. Banelar nagas are also known to be working with the Cyricist western Zhentarim based in Darkhold, but whether they do so with loyalty or as agents of Fzoul Chembryl is unknown.

BONE NAGA

A bone naga is a skeletal undead creature created from a naga by a spellcaster (usually of its own race). A *create undead* spell can produce a bone naga from any naga subject with fewer Hit Dice than the creator.

A bone naga looks like a serpentine skeleton and typically measures about 12 feet long. Its skull bears an eerie resemblance to that of a human, except that it sports long fangs. A cold, cruel light burns in the creature's eye sockets, giving it an air of unspeakable hatred and malice. Its tail ends in a vicious bone stinger.

Thought it despises servitude, a bone naga unswervingly obeys its creator, attacking even other nagas if so commanded. Should its master die, the bone naga becomes free-willed and can choose its own destiny.

sample Bone Naga

This skeletal creature looks like a giant undead snake, except for its humanlike skull and long, deadly fangs. Its tail ends in a bony stinger.

This example uses a 6th-level dark naga sorcerer as the base creature.

6th-level Dark Naga Sorcerer Bone Naga

Large Undead (Augmented Aberration)

Hit Dice: 9d12 plus 6d12 (58 hp)

Initiative: +6

Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)

Armor Class: 17 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +6 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 15

Base Attack/Grapple: +9/+15

Attack: Sting +12 melee (2d4+2 plus poison)

Full Attack: Sting +12 melee (2d4+2 plus poison) and bite +7 melee (1d4+1 plus poison)

Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Poison, spells

Special Qualities: Damage reduction 5/bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft., detect thoughts, guarded thoughts, immunity to cold and poison, resistance to charm, spell resistance 25, telepathy 250 ft.

Saves: Fort +10, Ref +14, Will +18

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 15, Con —, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 18

Skills: Bluff +20, Concentration +15, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +5 (+7 acting), Intimidate +6, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Listen +15, Sense Motive +10, Spellcraft +25, Spot +15

Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge, Eschew Materials^{B}, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Spell Focus (evocation)

Environment: Temperate hills

Organization: Solitary, pair, or nest (3–4)

Challenge Rating: 15

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Always evil

Advancement: 10–13 HD (Large); 14–27 HD (Huge) or by character class

Level Adjustment: —

Created by a rival hundred of years ago as a guard, this bone naga despises both its master and its condition.

COMBAT

This bone naga's master is still alive and has ordered it to guard the underground chambers where it performs magical research. The bone naga always scans the minds of intruders to determine their strengths and weaknesses before joining combat. It often begins by trying to intimidate its enemies with telepathic taunts. Thereafter, it resorts to spellcasting to soften up the more powerful-looking opponents. When it finally enters melee, it focuses its attacks on living opponents rather than undead or constructs, since the living are susceptible to its poison.

Poison (Ex): Bite, injury, Fortitude DC 17, initial and secondary damage 1d4 Str; or sting, injury, Fortitude DC 17, initial and secondary damage 1d4 Con.

Spells: This bone naga casts spells as a 13th-level sorcerer.

Detect Thoughts (Su): The bone naga can continuously use *detect thoughts* as the spell (caster level 9th; Will DC 17 negates). This ability is always active.

Guarded Thoughts (Ex): The bone naga is immune to any form of mind reading.

Resistance to Charm: The bone naga has a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against all charm effects.

Undead Traits: A bone naga is immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. It is not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage to its physical ability scores, ability drain, energy drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or death from massive damage. It cannot be *raised*, and *resurrection* works only if it is willing. Darkvision 60 ft.

Typical Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/7/7/6/6/4; save DC 14 + spell level): 0—*daze, detect magic, detect poison, light*†, *mage hand, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost*†, *read magic;* 1st—*expeditious retreat, magic missile*†, *ray of enfeeblement, shield, silent image;* 2nd—*cat's grace, eagle's splendor, invisibility, mirror image, scorching ray*†; 3rd—*dispel magic, displacement, fireball*†, *lightning bolt*†; 4th—*charm monster, fear, fire shield*†, *stoneskin;* 5th—*cloudkill, cone of cold*†, *hold monster;* 6th—*disintegrate, globe of invulnerability.*

†Because of Spell Focus (evocation), the DC for saves against these spells is 15 + spell level.

Possessions: Amulet of mighty fists +2, goggles of night, headband of resistance +5 (treat as *cloak of resistance +5*), diamond dust (500 gp).

CREATING A BONE NAGA

"Bone naga" is an acquired template that can be added to any naga (referred to hereafter as the base creature).

A bone naga has all the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

Illustration by Wayne England

Size and Type: The creature's type changes to undead. Do not recalculate base attack bonus, saves, or skill points. Size is unchanged.

Hit Dice: Increase all current and future Hit Dice to d12s.

Armor Class: A bone naga has a +6 natural armor bonus or the base creature's natural armor bonus, whichever is better.

Special Attacks: A bone naga retains all the base creature's special attacks except poison and also gains those described below.

Poison (Ex): Bite, injury, Fortitude DC (10 + 1/2 character level + Cha modifier), initial and secondary damage 1d4 Str; or sting, injury, Fortitude DC (10 + 1/2 character level + Cha modifier), initial and secondary damage 1d4 Con.

Special Qualities: A bone naga retains all the base creature's special qualities and also gains those described below.

Damage Reduction: Because a bone naga lacks flesh and internal organs, it has damage reduction 5/bludgeoning.

Immunities (Ex): Bone nagas are immune to cold.

Spell Resistance (Ex): A bone naga has SR equal to the creature's CR (after application of the bone naga template) +11 or the base creature's SR, whichever is higher.

Telepathy (Su): A bone naga can communicate telepathically with any creature within 250 feet that has a language.

Undead Traits: A bone naga is immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. It is not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage to its physical ability scores, ability drain, energy drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or death from massive damage. It cannot be *raised,* and *resurrection* works only if it is willing. Darkvision 60 ft.

Abilities: As an undead creature, a bone naga has no Constitution score.

Challenge Rating: Same as the base creature +1.

Treasure: None.

Alignment: Any evil.

Level Adjustment: —

Faerûnian Ha-naga

Colossal Aberration

Hit Dice: 24d8+264 (372 hp)

Initiative: +18

Speed: 60 ft. (12 squares), fly 120 ft. (perfect)

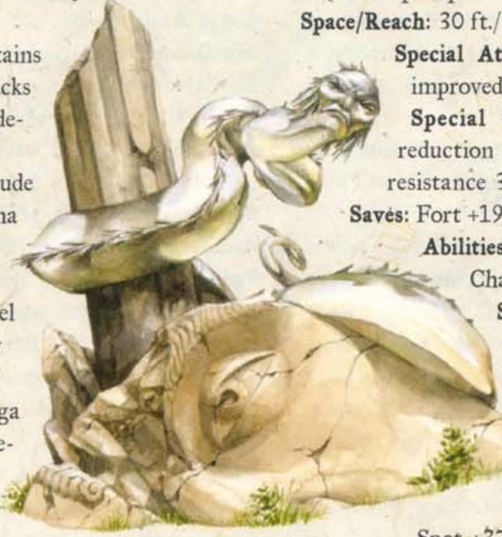
Armor Class: 40 (–8 size, +14 Dex, +24 natural), touch 16, flat-footed 26

Base Attack/Grapple: +18/+42

Attack: Coil whip +24 melee (4d6+8)

Full Attack: Coil whip +24 melee (4d6+8) and sting +22 melee (2d8+4 plus poison) and bite +22 melee (4d6+4)

Space/Reach: 30 ft./20 ft.



Faerûnian ha-naga

Illustration by Carl Frank

Special Attacks: Charming gaze, constrict 4d6+12, improved grab, poison, spells

Special Qualities: Chameleon scales, damage reduction 15/epic, darkvision 60 ft., flight, spell resistance 33

Saves: Fort +19, Ref +24, Will +24

Abilities: Str 27, Dex 38, Con 32, Int 35, Wis 31, Cha 36

Skills: Bluff +40, Concentration +38, Diplomacy +48, Disguise +40 (+42 acting), Escape Artist +41, Hide +35, Intimidate +44, Knowledge (history) +39, Listen +37, Move Silently +41 (+47 flying), Search +39, Sense Motive +37, Spellcraft +39, Spot +37, Survival +10 (+12 following tracks), Use Rope +14 (+16 bindings)

Feats: Combat Casting, Dodge, Eschew Materials^B^, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Multiattack, Spell Knowledge, Weapon Finesse

Environment: Warm forests

Organization: Solitary, pair, or nest (3–4)

Challenge Rating: 22

Treasure: Standard

Alignment: Usually chaotic evil

Advancement: 25–48 HD (Colossal)

Level Adjustment: —

A human-headed snake of immense size and power slithers forth, its scales nearly identical in color to the stones that surround it. Hatred gleams from its dark, penetrating eyes.

The Faerûnian ha-naga is a massive and powerful naga lord, often worshiped by spirit nagas as a god. It prefers to make its lair in the ruins of an ancient civilizations—preferably one that it has personally brought low. It usually establishes its nest in a former center of society, such as a temple, a throne room, or a coliseum. In this place, the ha-naga gathers together the treasures of the lost society, piling up art, fine jewelry, and the recorded history of the civilization as tributes to its own devastating prowess.

A Faerûnian ha-naga is a gigantic snake with the head of a classically beautiful human and a body that measures 100 feet or more in length. It has no set color; rather, its scales adopt the hues and shades of its surroundings, much like a chameleon's do.

Ha-nagas speak Abyssal and Common.

Combat

Though it has no wings, a Faerûnian ha-naga can fly, winding and coiling through the air in a manner similar to a water snake's motion. It uses this ability to its advantage in combat, swirling above and around foes while using its gaze attack or casting spells. Like its smaller serpentine cousins, a Faerûnian ha-naga prefers to use spells in combat, resorting to melee only when absolutely necessary. When it does engage foes directly, it uses its coiled body like a whip, stings with its tail, and constricts with its body.

Charming Gaze (Su): A Faerûnian ha-naga's gaze functions like the *mass charm* spell against creatures within 90 feet (Will DC 35 negates). The save DC is Charisma-based.

Constrict (Ex): A Faerûnian ha-naga deals 4d6+12 points of damage with a successful grapple attack against a Huge or smaller opponent.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a Faerûnian ha-naga must hit with its coil whip attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Poison (Ex): Sting, Fortitude DC 33, initial and secondary damage 2d8 Con. The save is Constitution-based.

Spells: A Faerûnian ha-naga can cast spells as a 21st-level sorcerer, and can also cast spells from the cleric list and from the Chaos and Evil domains. The cleric spells and domain spells are considered arcane spells for a Faerûnian ha-naga, meaning that it does not need a divine focus to cast them.

Typical Spells Known (6/10/9/9/9/9/8/8/8/8; save DC 23 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark, detect magic, ghost sound, light, mage hand, message, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic;* 1st—*alarm, comprehend languages, disguise self, mage armor, magic missile;* 2nd—*eagle's splendor, protection from arrows, spectral hand, Tasha's hideous laughter, touch of idiocy;* 3rd—*fireball, lightning bolt, rage, suggestion;* 4th—*crushing despair, fire shield, ice storm, stoneskin;* 5th—*baleful polymorph, dominate person, nightmare, wall of force;* 6th—*chain lightning, greater heroism, true seeing;* 7th—*greater arcane sight, insanity, Mordenkainen's sword;* 8th—*mass charm monster, demand, polar ray;* 9th—*meteor swarm, power word kill, prismatic sphere, wail of the banshee, wish.*

Chameleon Scales (Ex): Because of its ever-changing scales, a Faerûnian ha-naga blends in with its surroundings, gaining a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

Flight (Su): A Faerûnian ha-naga can fly as though with the *fly* spell at 120 feet with perfect maneuverability. This ability grants it a +6 circumstance bonus on Move Silently checks when flying.

In the Realms

Faerûnian ha-nagas are native to the Mhair Jungles and are most commonly found in the forests of the Chultan Peninsula. A trio of them reportedly leads the spirit nagas of the Chultengar. A ha-naga named Terpenzi was the first king of Najara, Kingdom of Snakes, and still serves as its guardian in undeath.

Iridescent Naga

Large Aberration
Hit Dice: 9d8+27 (67 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
Armor Class: 14 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +6/+12
Attack: Sting +7 melee (2d4+2 plus poison)
Full Attack: Sting +7 melee (2d4+2 plus poison) and bite +2 melee (2d4+1 plus poison)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Hypnotic sway, poison, spells
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., iron mind
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +7, Will +9
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 17
Skills: Bluff +10, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +5 (+7 acting), Intimidate +5, Listen +12, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +11, Spot +12
Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Dodge, Eschew Materials[B], Lighting Reflexes
Environment: Temperate forests
Organization: Solitary, pair, or nest (3–4)
Challenge Rating: 8
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic good
Advancement: 10–18 HD (Large); 19–27 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: —

Sunlight reflects from the bright scales of this snakelike creature, splintering into a scintillating array of colors. Its humanlike head is crowned with feathers in several brilliant hues.

Iridescent nagas spend their lives wandering the land in search of new discoveries and hidden beauty. They favor ancient, overgrown ruins that have been transformed into places of wild splendor as temporary lairs.

An iridescent naga appears multihued because its fine, mirrorlike scales split light into many colors. It has a vaguely human head, colorful feathers in lieu of hair, and a frill of silver feathers running from its neck down to its tail tip.

Iridescent nagas speak Celestial and Common.

Combat

Iridescent nagas avoid combat if possible, preferring to hypnotize their foes and suggest other courses of action. Should hostilities ensue, iridescent nagas prefer the high ground, where they can employ their spells and hypnotic swaying while staying out of their foes' reach.

Hypnotic Sway (Su): By swaying in place, an iridescent naga can produce an effect like that of the *hypnotism* spell that affects every creature within 30 feet (Will DC 17 negates). The save DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 17 or lapse into deep sleep for 2d4 minutes. The save DC is Constitution-based.

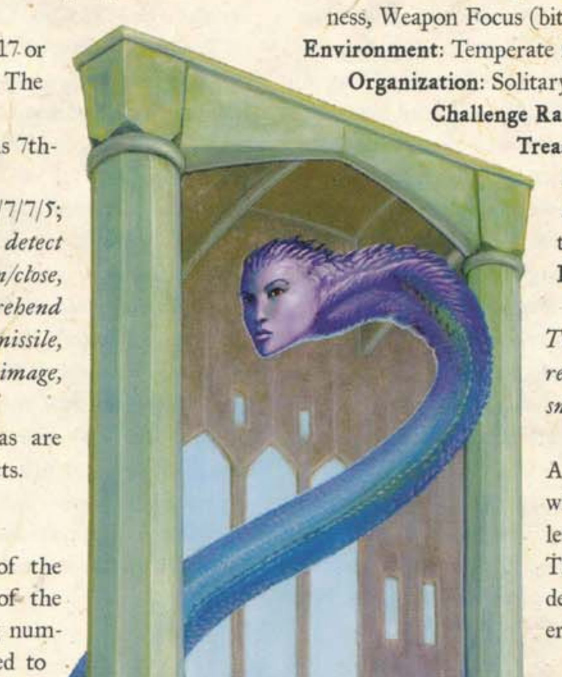
Spells: Iridescent nagas cast spells as 7th-level sorcerers.

Typical Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/7/5; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*daze, detect magic, light, mage hand, message, open/close, read magic;* 1st—*color spray, comprehend languages, expeditious retreat, magic missile, shield;* 2nd—*eagle's splendor, mirror image, scorching ray;* 3rd—*fly, lightning bolt.*

Iron Mind (Su): Iridescent nagas are immune to all mind-influencing effects.

IN THE REALMS

Iridescent nagas haunt the depths of the Chondalwood, near the headwaters of the Nagaflow. In recent years, increasing numbers of these creatures have migrated to the southern reaches of Cormanthyr to challenge the hegemony of the Cult of the Dark Naga, and to the Jungles of Chult to oppose the spirit nagas of the Chultengar.



Iridescent naga

Illustration by Jeremy Jarvis

Nagahydra

Huge Aberration
Hit Dice: 18d8+90 (174 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares), swim 50 ft.
Armor Class: 20 (–2 size, +2 Dex, +10 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 18
Base Attack/Grapple: +13/+31
Attack: Bite +22 melee (2d6+10 plus poison)
Full Attack: 7 bites +22 melee (2d6+10 plus poison)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison, spells
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 15, scent
Saves: Fort +11, Ref +10, Will +17
Abilities: Str 30, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 16, Wis 19, Cha 21
Skills: Bluff +18, Concentration +18, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +18 (+20 acting), Intimidate +21, Listen +21, Sense Motive +17, Spellcraft +16, Spot +21, Swim +18
Feats: Alertness, Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes^B, Dodge, Eschew Materials^B, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bite).
Environment: Temperate forests
Organization: Solitary, pair, or nest (3–4)
Challenge Rating: 18
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral
Advancement: 19–36 HD (Gargantuan); 37–54 HD (Colossal)
Level Adjustment: —

This hideous, multihued monstrosity resembles a tangle of human-headed snakes sharing a common tail.

A nagahydra is a serpentine monster with five heads, each of which can unleash a devastating barrage of spells. This fearsome predator haunts the depths of ancient forests, hunting lesser beings for food.

A nagahydra's body is covered with a reticulated array of scales in varying hues. Common colors include black, bright crimson, deep purple, emerald green, green-gold and silver. A thicket of fiery red and orange spines juts from its body along each of its backbones. A typical specimen is about 20 feet long and weighs about 2,000 pounds.

Nagahydras speak Common and one of the following: Abyssal, Celestial, or Infernal.

COMBAT

Like a hydra, a nagahydra can attack with all its heads at no penalty, even if it moves or charges during the round.

A nagahydra can be killed either by severing all its heads or by slaying its body. To sever a head, an opponent must make a successful sunder attempt with a slashing weapon. (The player should declare where the attack is aimed before making the attack roll.) Making a sunder attempt provokes an attack of opportunity unless the foe has the Improved Sunder feat. An opponent can strike at a nagahydra's heads from any position in which he could strike at the nagahydra itself because its heads writhe and whip about in combat. An opponent can ready an action to attempt to sunder a nagahydra's head when the creature bites at him.

Each of a nagahydra's heads has hit points equal to the creature's full normal hit point total, divided by 5. Since a normal nagahydra has 174 hit points, 34 or more points of damage severs a head (174 ÷ 5 = 34.8, rounded down to 34). A natural reflex seals the neck shut to prevent further blood loss. A nagahydra can no longer attack with a severed head but takes no other penalties. A severed nagahydra head grows back from a stump in 1d4 rounds. The application of at least 5 points of acid or fire damage to a stump (touch attack required to hit) prevents a stump from regrowing for 24 hours. A flaming weapon (or similar effect) deals its energy damage to the stump in the same blow in which a head is severed. Fire or acid damage from an area effect (such as a *fireball* or dragon breath) may burn multiple stumps in addition to dealing damage to the nagahydra's body. A nagahydra does not die from losing its heads until all of them have been cut off and the stumps seared by fire or acid.

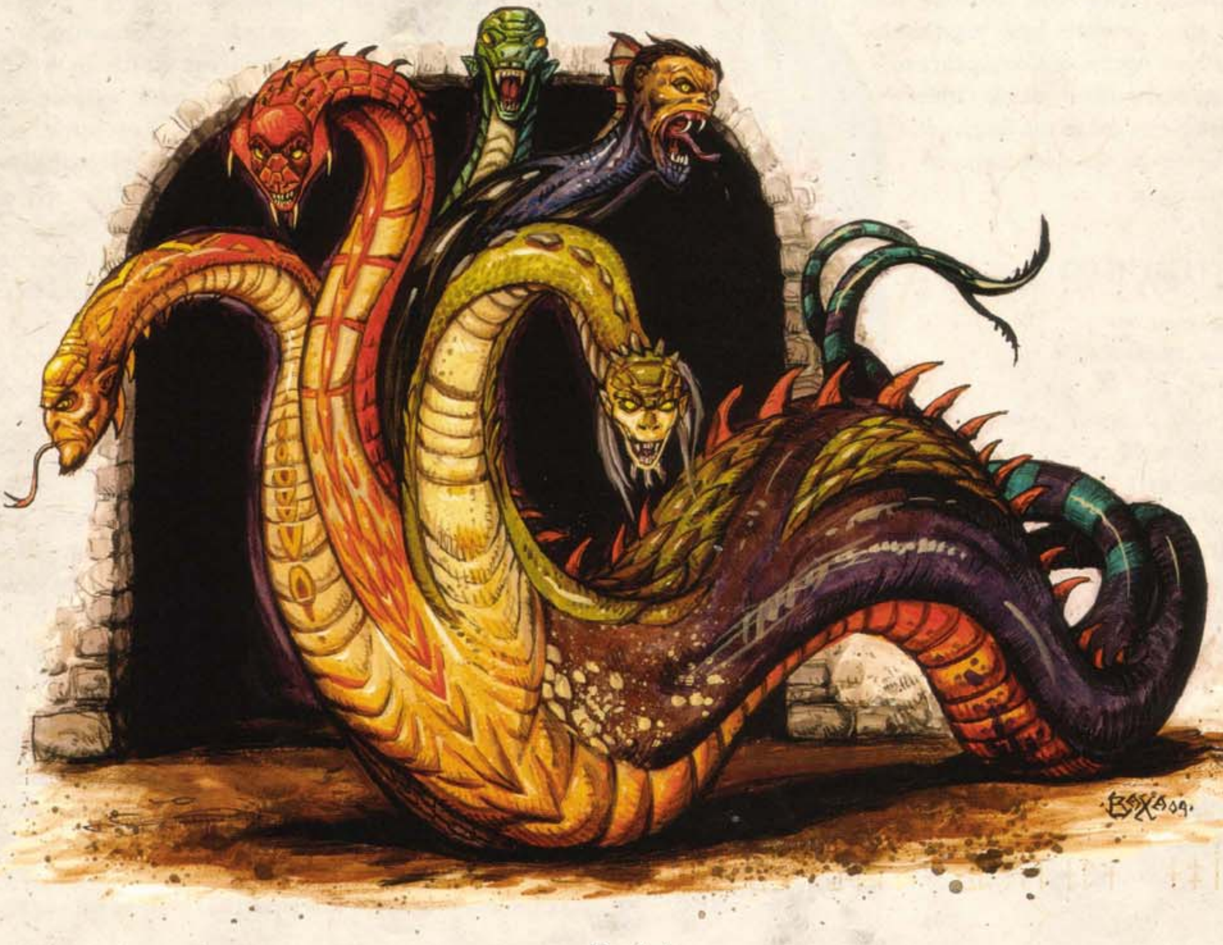
A nagahydra's body can be slain just like any other creature's, but nagahydras possess fast healing and thus are difficult to defeat in this fashion. Any attack that is not (or cannot be) an attempt to sunder a head affects the body. For example, area effects deal damage to a nagahydra's body, not to its heads. Targeted magical effects cannot sever a nagahydra's heads (and thus must be directed at the body) unless they deal slashing damage and could be used to make sunder attempts.

Poison (Ex): Bite, injury, Fortitude DC 24, initial and secondary damage 1d12 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spells: Nagahydras cast spells as 15th-level sorcerers, and can also cast spells from the cleric list and from the Destruction and Scalykind domains. A nagahydra can cast one spell per round per head, but all spells come from the common pool of spells available.

Typical Sorcerer Spells Known (6/8/7/7/7/7/6/4; save DC 15 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, detect poison, light, mage hand, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic, resistance;* 1st—*alarm, burning hands, mage armor, ray of enfeeblement, Tenser's floating disk;* 2nd—*bull's strength, eagle's splendor, fog cloud, scorching ray, see invisibility;* 3rd—*blink, dispel magic, fireball, fly;* 4th—*confusion, fire shield, stoneskin, wall of fire;* 5th—*cone of cold, dominate humanoid, summon monster V, teleport;* 6th—*chain lightning, globe of invulnerability, mass hold person;* 7th—*forcecage, limited wish.*

Skills: A nagahydra has a +2 racial bonus on Listen and Spot checks, thanks to its multiple heads.



Nagahydra

Illustration by Thomas Baxa

A nagahydra has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

Feats: A nagahydra's Combat Reflexes feat allows it to use all its heads for attacks of opportunity.

In the Realms

Nagahydras are most frequently encountered in the depths of the Jungles of Chult and the Mhair Jungles. Recent reports of a nest of nagas haunting the depths of the Qurth Forest may in fact stem from the presence of a nagahydra lairing in the ruins of an overgrown city.

Nifern

Medium Animal
Hit Dice: 2d8+4 (10 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
Armor Class: 16 (+2 Dex, +4 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+4
Attack: Claw +4 melee (1d6+3)
Full Attack: 2 claws +4 melee (1d6+3) and bite +2 melee (1d8+1) and sting +2 melee (1d4+1 plus poison)
Special Attacks: Poison
Special Qualities: Blindsight 60 ft., hold breath, low-light vision
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +2
Abilities: Str 16, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 2, Wis 14, Cha 9
Skills: Listen +3, Spot +4, Survival +4 (+9 when tracking)*
Feats: Multiattack, Track[B]
Environment: Underground
Organization: Solitary, pair, group (3–5), or pack (6–12)
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 3–4 HD (Medium); 5–6 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: —

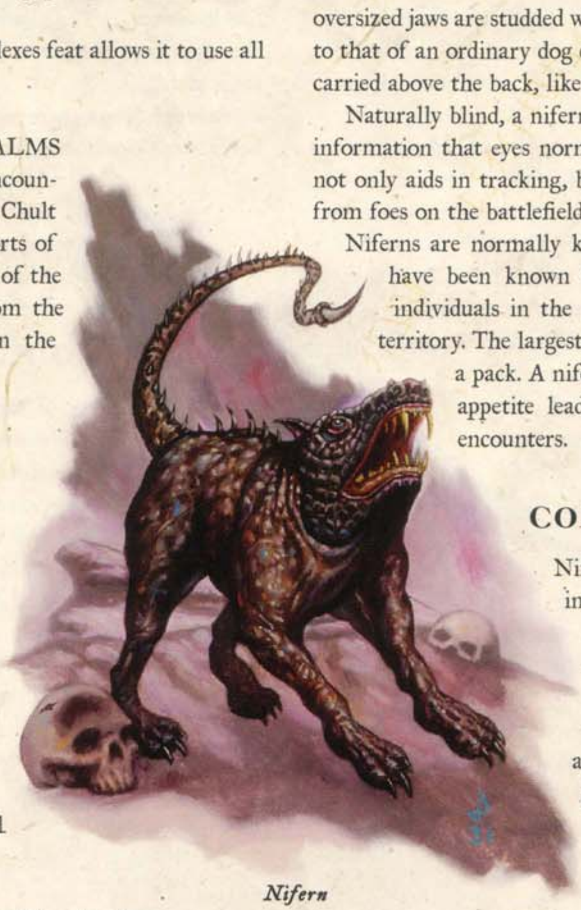
A quadruped resembling a hairless, scaly dog pads out of the jungle on extra-large paws. Its tail curves up over its head, ending in a deadly-looking stinger.

Niferns are the scaly equivalents of hunting dogs. Though native to the Underdark, many of them exist aboveground, both in the wild and as pets. Scalykind creatures often employ niferns as hunters, trackers, and loyal guardians.

A nifern is a scaled quadruped with a head that looks like an odd cross between a lizard's and a canine's. It has no eyes, and its oversized jaws are studded with sharp fangs. Its tail looks similar to that of an ordinary dog except that it ends in a stinger and is carried above the back, like a scorpion's.

Naturally blind, a nifern uses its other senses to provide the information that eyes normally would. Its keen sense of smell not only aids in tracking, but also helps it differentiate friends from foes on the battlefield.

Niferns are normally kept in small groups, although they have been known to form packs of thirty or more individuals in the wild, menacing all who enter their territory. The largest and strongest nifern normally leads a pack. A nifern's drive for food and its voracious appetite lead it to attack nearly everything it encounters.



Nifern

Illustration by Jim Pavelec

combat

Niferns prefer to attack their prey in numbers, but their tactics are fairly straightforward. They rush head-on into battle and sting to immobilize their prey. Creatures that prove resistant to the poison are attacked with vicious claws and powerful jaws.

Poison (Ex): Sting, Fortitude DC 13, initial damage paralysis for 1d10 rounds, secondary damage 1d4 Str.

Hold Breath (Ex): A nifern can hold its breath for a number of rounds equal to four times its Constitution score before it risks drowning (see page 304 of the *Dungeon Master' Guide*).

Skills: *Because of its keen sense of smell and natural instinct for tracking, a nifern receives a +5 racial bonus on Survival checks made to track.

in the realms

Niferns are the hunting animals of choice among scalykind, favored by lizardfolk, troglodytes, dragonkin, and others. Because niferns can also bond with Scaleless Ones, they are also popular throughout the Underdark, where they are employed as trackers by the illithids, a few drow, and members of other notoriously evil races.

sarrukh (progenitor race)

Medium Monstrous Humanoid
Hit Dice: 14d8+70 (133 hp)
Initiative: +6
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)
Armor Class: 30 (+2 Dex, +18 natural), touch 12, flat-footed 28
Base Attack/Grapple: +14/+20
Attack: *+3 trident* +23 melee (1d8+12)
Full Attack: *+3 trident* +23/+18/+13 melee (1d8+12) and bite +15 melee (1d6+3 plus poison) or 2 claws +20 melee (1d8+6) and bite +15 melee (1d6+3 plus poison)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Fear aura, poison, manipulate form, spell-like abilities
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to fire, spell resistance 20
Saves: Fort +9, Ref +11, Will +13
Abilities: Str 23, Dex 15, Con 20, Int 30, Wis 18, Cha 18
Skills: Appraise +27, Bluff +23, Concentration +22, Decipher Script +27, Diplomacy +23, Disguise +4 (+6 acting), Heal +21, Intimidate +25, Knowledge (arcana) +27, Knowledge (history) +27, Knowledge (religion) +27, Listen +6, Move Silently +19, Spot +21
Feats: Alertness, Combat Expertise, Improved Initiative, Persuasive, Power Attack
Environment: Warm deserts
Organization: Single, pair, or group (3–8)
Challenge Rating: 21
Treasure: Triple standard
Alignment: Always neutral evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +8

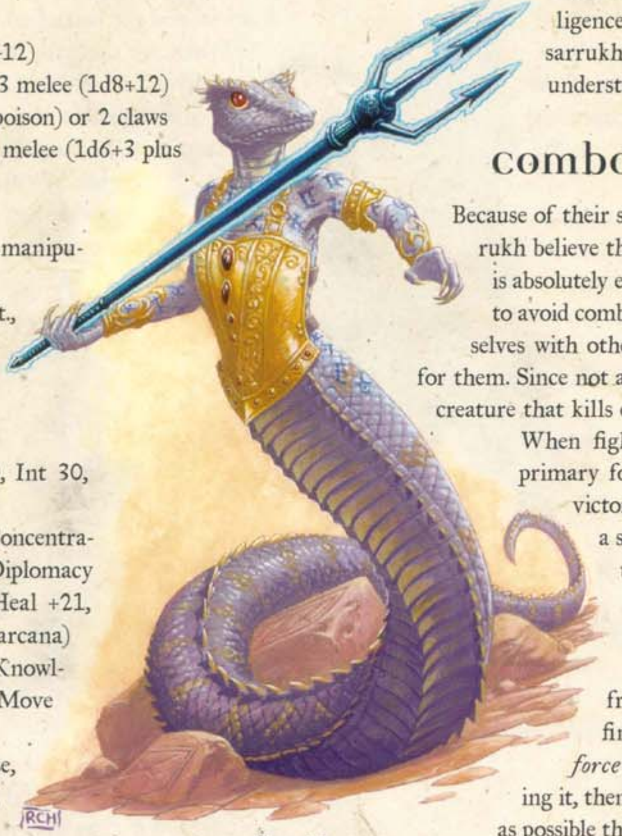

Sarrukh

Illustration by Ralph Horsley

A snake with the upper torso of a human weaves in place, its red eyes gleaming with menace. It clutches a trident in its clawed hands.

The sarrukh constitute one of the five original progenitor races of Faerûn. In their three great empires, the sarrukh created a plethora of scaly races, including the nagas, the yuan-ti, and the lizardfolk.

An individual sarrukh's body may be either bipedal or snakelike. A snakelike sarrukh has a serpentine body and head, plus two powerful arms that end in vicious claws. A bipedal sarrukh has a humanoid upper torso, head, arms, and legs with a snakelike lower torso. The gleaming red eyes of a sarrukh strike fear into the hearts of all other Scaled Ones. Both variants share the same statistics.

Sarrukh speak their own language, called Sarrukhar, which bears some similarities to Draconic. Any creature that speaks Draconic can make a DC 15 Intelligence check to communicate with a sarrukh. Failure indicates only partial understanding.

combat

Because of their slowly shrinking numbers, the sarrukh believe that the survival of each individual is absolutely essential. This outlook causes them to avoid combat at all costs and surround themselves with other scaled creatures that can fight for them. Since not a single sarrukh is expendable, any creature that kills one makes enemies of them all.

When fighting is unavoidable, a sarrukh's primary focus is always escape rather than victory. It typically begins combat with a spell-like ability that deals damage to a number of combatants simultaneously—*fireball* if the area is relatively open, or *lightning bolt* if its opponents are approaching from a hallway or some other confining area. It follows with a *wall of force* to prevent opponents from reaching it, then attempts to teleport away as soon as possible thereafter. If *teleport* isn't an option, a sarrukh may use *polymorph* to change into a small animal and scurry away from the battle. Sarrukh enter melee combat only if death appears to be unavoidable.

Fear Aura (Su): As a free action, a sarrukh can create an aura of fear in a 10-foot radius. This effect is otherwise identical to the *fear* spell (caster level 14th; save DC 21). A creature that succeeds on the save cannot be affected again by that sarrukh's fear aura for 24 hours. Other sarrukh are immune to this aura. The DC is Charisma-based.

Poison (Ex): Bite, injury, Fortitude DC 22, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

Manipulate Form (Su): At will, a sarrukh can modify the form of any Scaled One native to Toril, except for aquatic and undead creatures. With a successful touch attack, it can cause one alteration of its choice in the target creature's body. The target falls unconscious for 2d4 rounds due to the shock of changing form. A successful DC 22 Fortitude save negates both the change and the unconsciousness. Sarrukh are immune to this effect.

A sarrukh may use this ability to change a minor aspect of the target creature, such as the shape of its head or the color of its scales. It may also choose to make a much more significant alteration, such as converting limbs into tentacles, changing overall body shape (snake to humanoid, for example), or adding or removing an appendage. Any ability score may be decreased to a minimum of 1 or increased to a maximum equal to the sarrukh's corresponding score. A sarrukh may also grant the target an extraordinary, supernatural, or spell-like ability or remove one from it.

The change bestowed takes effect immediately and is permanent. Furthermore, the alterations are automatically passed on to all the creature's offspring when it breeds with another of its unmodified kind.

Typical physical alterations that sarrukh often bestow with this ability include the following.

Arm: The touched creature sprouts a humanlike arm that ends in a viciously clawed hand. The sarrukh may, at its option, change an already existing appendage (such as a tentacle) into an arm, or cause a new arm to sprout from a spot of its choice. The creature can manipulate small items and wield weapons with the new appendage as effectively as a normal human can with a hand. The creature also gains a claw attack as a natural attack (base damage 1d8 for a Medium creature). The claw is a secondary attack if the subject already has a different primary attack, or primary otherwise.

Leg: The touched creature sprouts a humanlike leg. The sarrukh may, at its option, change an already existing appendage (such as a tentacle) into a leg, or cause a new leg to sprout from a spot of its choice. A pair of such legs gives the creature the ability to walk upright, and four legs give it the ability to move like a quadruped. The creature loses any ability it previously had to constrict with its lower body. Its speed remains the same as it was before the alteration unless it now has more than two legs. In that case, it moves at a speed typical for a quadruped of its size category.

Tentacles: The touched creature sprouts a tentacle. The sarrukh may, at its option, change an already existing appendage (such as an arm) into a tentacle, or cause a new tentacle to sprout from a spot of its choice. The subject can now wield a melee weapon in each tentacle acquired. Furthermore, the creature gains a slam attack as a natural attack (base damage 1d8 for a Medium creature). The tentacle is a secondary attack if the subject already has a different primary attack, or primary otherwise. The subject also acquires the improved grab special attack if it didn't already have it.

Humanoid Torso: A humanoid torso replaces the subject's previous torso. The subject loses any special attack or special quality dependent on its previous torso (such as constrict or improved grab).

Snake Torso: A snake torso replaces the subject's previous torso, granting it the constrict and improved grab special attacks if it didn't already have them. Its speed remains the same as it was before the alteration.

Wings: The subject sprouts feathery wings from its back. These appendages grant it the ability to fly at its previous land speed with average maneuverability.

Omnidirectional Eyes: The subject can move its eyes independently from one another and visually process all the information so acquired. The creature gains a +4 bonus on Spot checks but takes a –2 penalty to Charisma.

Increase or Decrease Size: The subject's size category changes by one step. All the usual bonuses or penalties for such a change apply normally (see page 291 in the *Monster Manual*).

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*disrupt undead, identify, invisibility, knock, magic missile, misdirection* (DC 16), *see invisibility, sleep* (DC 15); 2/day—*confusion* (DC 18), *fireball* (DC 17), *lightning bolt* (DC 17), *polymorph;* 1/day—*teleport* (DC 19), *wall of force.* Caster level 14th.

In the Realms

The sarrukh were the overlords of the first civilizations ever to rise in Toril. In cities both above- and belowground, they altered the lesser scaled races via breeding and magic to create numerous servitor races.

The many experiments that the sarrukh performed upon their finest creations, the yuan-ti, resulted in the wildly divergent forms of that race. The lizardfolk and the other lesser races were rarely the subjects of magical experimentation, though they performed the bulk of the hard labor.

Today, thousands of years after the fall of their mighty civilizations, the sarrukh are all but extinct. The few that remain spend much of their time in hibernation, but when they do interact with the outside world, they usually work to advance the welfare of the creatures they created, which now thrive in their stead.

Serpentflesh Golem

Large Construct
Hit Dice: 11d10 (90 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 40 ft. (8 squares)
Armor Class: 21 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +10 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 19
Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+16
Attack: Slam +11 melee
Full Attack: 2 slams +11 melee (2d6+4) and bite +6 melee (1d8+2 plus poison)
Space/Reach: 10 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison

Special Qualities: Construct traits, damage reduction 10/adamantine, darkvision 60 ft., immunity to magic, low-light vision, resistance to fire 20
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3
Abilities: Str 18, Dex 15, Con —, Int —, Wis 11, Cha 1
Skills: —
Feats: —
Environment: Any
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 8
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral evil
Advancement: 12–22 HD (Large); 23–33 HD (Huge)
Level Adjustment: —

This automaton like a grisly assortment of decaying serpentine body parts grafted together into a gruesome form. Its massive arms end in wicked claws, and it smells of decaying meat.

Serpentflesh golems are often created by spellcasters with grudges against the Scaled Ones. Such individuals take a cruel pleasure in forcing serpents to bend to their will, even if it is only after death.

A golem of this sort is a scaly, vaguely humanoid creature that has been crafted from the body parts of various Scaled Ones. It bears a superficial resemblance to a flesh golem in that the points where the flesh of different creatures has been joined are usually obvious. A serpentflesh golem has a snake torso with massive arms that end in clawed hands and either a tail or a pair of humanlike legs.

COMBAT

A serpentflesh golem is more dexterous than most other golems, and it uses this speed to advantage in combat. It typically begins a battle with slam attacks using either its arms or its tail. It saves its bite attack for opponents that prove resistant to its raw brutality.

Poison (Ex): Bite, injury, Fortitude DC 15, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Str.

Construct Traits: A serpentflesh golem has immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromancy effects, mind-influencing effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. It is not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or energy drain. Cannot heal damage, but can be repaired. Darkvision 60 ft. and low-light vision.

Immunity to Magic (Ex): A serpentflesh golem is immune to any spell or spell-like ability that allows spell resistance. In addition, certain spells and effects function differently against the creature, as noted below.

A magical attack that deals cold or fire damage slows a serpentflesh golem (as the *slow* spell) for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw. A magical attack that deals electricity damage

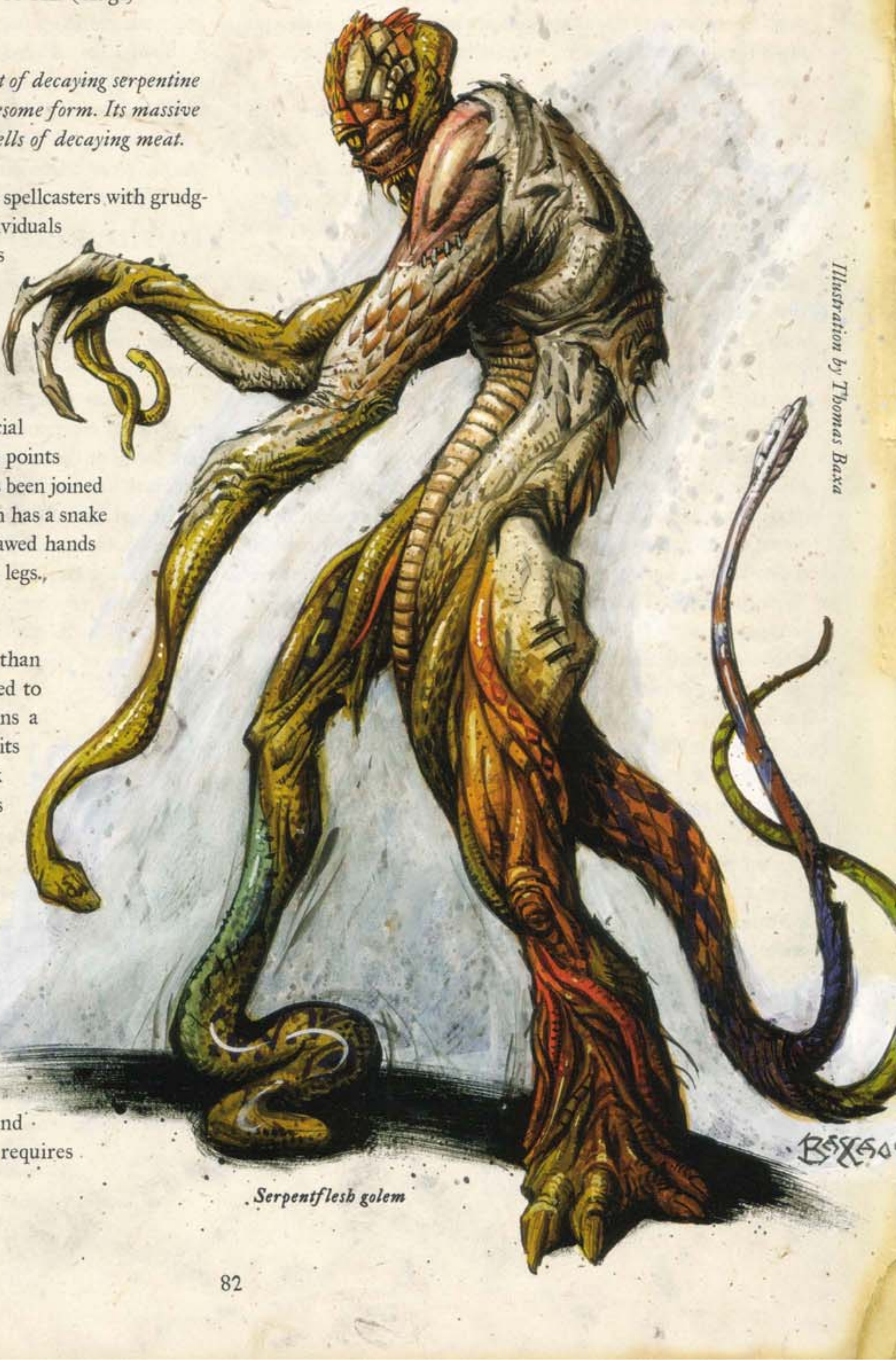

Serpentflesh golem

Illustration by Thomas Baxa

breaks any *slow* effect on the golem and heals 1 point of damage for every 3 points of damage the attack would otherwise deal. If the amount of healing would cause the serpentflesh golem to exceed its full normal hit points, it gains any excess as temporary hit points. For example, a serpentflesh golem hit by a *lightning bolt* heals 3 points of damage if the attack would have dealt 11 points of damage. It gets no saving throw against attacks that deal electricity damage.

Construction

The parts for a serpentflesh golem must all come from normal scaly corpses that have not decayed significantly. At least one body is needed per desired limb, plus one for the torso and one for the brain. Special unguents and bindings worth 500 gp are also required. Each additional arm beyond two raises the cost by 5,000 gp and 100 XP. Creating a serpentflesh golem requires casting a spell with the evil descriptor.

Assembling the body requires a DC 13 Craft (leatherworking) check or a DC 13 Heal check.

CL 8th; Craft Construct (see page 303 in the *Monster Manual*), *animate dead, bull's strength, geas/quest, limited wish,* caster must be at least 8th level; Price 20,000 gp; Cost 10,500 gp + 780 XP (or more, see above).

In the Realms

Much less common than flesh golems, serpentflesh golems almost always serve evil masters as guardians. The yuan-ti, the sarrukh, and other serpent races consider them perversions and almost never use them. Anyone creating a serpentflesh golem is likely to be attacked by other serpent races when the creature's existence is discovered.

Snakes

The Serpent Kingdoms are home to a wide variety of snakes, some of which are seen only rarely.

Skills: A snake has a +4 racial bonus on Hide, Listen, and Spot checks and a +8 racial bonus on Balance and Climb checks.

A snake can always choose to take 10 on a Climb check, even if rushed or threatened.

A snake uses either its Strength modifier or its Dexterity modifier for Climb checks, whichever is higher.

Dung Snake

Medium Animal
Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Armor Class: 15 (+3 Dex, +2 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 12
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+5
Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d3+4)
Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d3+4)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d3+4, improved grab
Special Qualities: Environmental adaptation, fast healing 1, immunity to disease, low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2
Abilities: Str 17, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills: Balance +14, Climb +14, Hide +13, Listen +10, Spot +10, Swim +11
Feats: Alertness, Multigrab^{B}, Toughness
Environment: Temperate aquatic
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —
Level Adjustment: —

A brown, unpleasant-looking snake clad in a layer of slime rests atop a dung heap, its tongue flicking in and out.

Dung snakes thrive amid muck and decay. In cold conditions, they burrow deep into compost piles, cesspools, and similar sources of warmth, emerging only when disturbed or when warm weather returns. This habit gives dung snakes a fearsome folk reputation.

A dung snake is a water-dwelling constrictor snake with brown scales. It exudes a slimy, odoriferous substance that gives its body a sheen.

Dung snakes are among the creatures that a spellcaster can take as a normal (not improved) familiar. A dung snake familiar grants its master a +2 bonus on saving throws against disease.

Combat

The dung snake kills by holding its prey underwater while constricting.

Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a dung snake deals 1d3+4 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a dung snake must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Environmental Adaptation (Ex): Dung snakes can exude a protective slime around themselves, protecting them from nonlethal cold damage.

Skills: In addition to the racial skill bonuses noted for all snakes above, a dung snake has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

In the Realms

Dung snakes are found in Undermountain (particularly the River Sargauth), the Rat Hills, and in cesspools and marshlands all over Faerûn (especially the Marsh of Chelimber).

glacier snake

Medium Animal
Hit Dice: 2d8+6 (15 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 13
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+0
Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d6+3)
Full Attack: Bite +4 melee (1d6+3) and sting +2 melee (1d6+1)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: —
Special Qualities: Fast healing 1, low-light vision
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +1
Abilities: Str 17, Dex 17, Con 16, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills: Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +8, Listen +9, Spot +9
Feats: Alertness, Multiattack^{B}, Weapon Finesse^{B}
Environment: Cold mountains
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 3 HD (Medium); 4–6 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: —

A brown-furred serpent leaps forth to sting a hapless animal with its tail, then bites with a ring of fearsome teeth around its mouth.

The internal processes of this rare, furred reptile keep it warm enough to function in snow and ice. A fearless predator of the glaciers, it comes down into the lowlands only during severe winter weather. There is no such thing as a satiated glacier snake; the creature eats endlessly as long as food is available. If unchecked, a single snake can devour every member of an adventuring band or nomadic tribe without stopping.

A glacier snake's 12-foot body is covered with a thick, brown pelt of fur instead of scales. Its razor-sharp teeth surround its mouth in a ring, and it has a bony stinger at the tip of its tail.

The thick, soft pelt of a glacier snake is prized by garment makers.

Combat

A glacier snake has no venom, but its tail ends in a bone stinger that it uses to stab enemies in combat. When wounded, it depends on its fast healing ability to remain alive. Many adventurers have been surprised to see its blood escaping as steam from a wound.

In the Realms

Glacier snakes are most common amidst the mountains of the Spine of the World, in the Cold Vale of northern Luruar, on the High Ice of Anauroch, and along the southern edge of the Great Glacier. In addition, they have recently been spotted on the Glacier of the White Worm by the monks of the Monastery of the Yellow Rose, but it is unclear whether the creatures are long-standing inhabitants of that region or recent introductions.

Reed snake

Tiny Animal
Hit Dice: 1/4 d8 (1 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 15 ft. (3 squares), climb 15 ft.
Armor Class: 18 (+2 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 15, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple: +0/–11
Attack: Bite +5 melee (1 plus poison)
Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1 plus poison)
Space/Reach: 2-1/2 ft./2-1/2 ft.
Special Attacks: Poison
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +1
Abilities: Str 4, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills: Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +15, Listen +7, Spot +7
Feat: Ability Focus (poison), Weapon Finesse^{B}
Environment: Temperate plains
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 1/2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: —
Level Adjustment: —

Thin as a flower stem, a delicate-looking viper slithers through the long grass of the plain.

Reed snakes spend most of the day below thick grass cover, hunting only at night. They sometimes attack sleeping humanoids, often killing them with their unusually virulent poison.

A reed snake measures between 2 and 4 feet in length. Its incredibly thin body is covered with dull green scales.

Reed snakes are among the creatures that a spellcaster can take as a normal (not improved) familiar. A reed snake familiar grants its master a +2 bonus on saving throws against poison.

Combat

The reed snake relies on its venomous bite to kill prey and defend itself.

Poison (Ex): Bite, Fortitude DC 12; initial and secondary damage 1d6 Constitution. The save DC is Constitution-based.

IN THE REALMS

The "thin" or reed snake is native to the Pelleor's Prairie, which separates the Hill of Lost Souls, the Battle of Bones, and the Shaeridim.

sewerm

Small Animal
Hit Dice: 2d8 (9 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 20 ft. (8 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Armor Class: 17 (+1 size, +3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 14, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+16
Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d4+4)
Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d4+4)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Attach, blood drain, poison
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +1
Abilities: Str 17, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills: Balance +11, Climb +11, Hide +18, Jump +7, Listen +7, Spot +7, Swim +11
Feats: Alertness, Weapon Finesse^B
Environment: Temperate marshes
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 3–4 HD (Medium); 5–6 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: —

A dun-colored serpent moves slowly through the swamp muck, its oversized fangs gleaming in the moonlight.

Illustration by Jim Pavelec

Sewerms are water snakes that have adapted to living in sewers and swamps. They feed on warm blood in a fashion similar to leeches.

A sewerm has tan and brown scales in a reticulated pattern and a mottled green underbelly. It can grow to a length of 8 feet.

Sewerms are among the creatures that a spellcaster can take as a normal (not improved) familiar. A sewerm familiar grants its master a +2 bonus on saving throws against effects that cause pain (such as a *symbol of pain*).

COMBAT

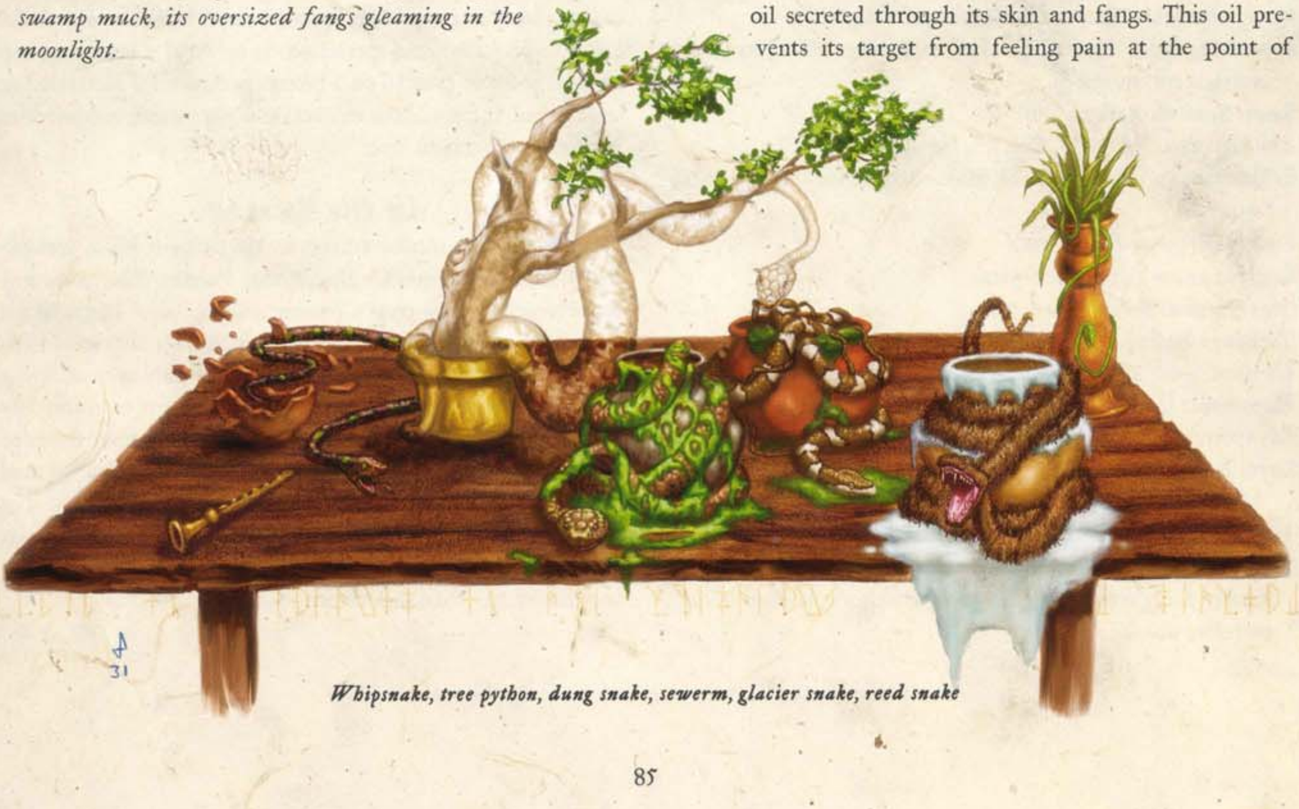
Unless threatened, sewerms attack only warm-blooded creatures. A sewerm typically attaches to a victim's limb (preferably one that extends underwater) with a bite attack, then wraps its body around the limb. Once so secured, it begins draining blood. Because of the anesthetic secretions a sewerm secretes from its fangs and skin, most victims are unaware of its presence. The creature can also coil itself up and spring out of the water to strike a target that cannot be attacked below the water (such as a humanoid wearing hip boots).

Attach (Ex): If a sewerm hits with a bite attack, it latches onto the opponent's body and is effectively grappling its prey. The sewerm loses its Dexterity bonus to AC and has an AC of 14. A sewerm has a +16 racial bonus on grapple checks (already figured into the Base Attack/Grapple entry above).

An attached sewerm can be struck with a weapon or grappled itself. To remove an attached sewerm through grappling, the opponent must achieve a pin against it.

Blood Drain (Ex): A sewerm drains blood, dealing automatic bite damage in any round when it begins its turn attached to a victim. Once it has dealt 30 points of damage, it detaches and flees to digest the meal.

Poison (Ex): A sewerm's "venom" is actually an anesthetic oil secreted through its skin and fangs. This oil prevents its target from feeling pain at the point of



Whipsnake, tree python, dung snake, sewerm, glacier snake, reed snake

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contact, even if it is taking hit point damage. The sewerm uses this oil to prevent its victims from noticing its presence while it feeds.

Bite, injury or contact, Fortitude DC 11; initial and secondary damage anesthetic. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skills: In addition to the racial skill bonuses noted for all snakes above, a sewerm has +8 racial bonus on Jump checks, and its racial bonus on Hide checks is +8 instead of +4. It also has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

IN THE REALMS

Sewerms are often found in the sewers of Waterdeep and the fouled, fetid waters of the swamps in the northern Sword Coast (including Mere of Dead Men and Stump Bog). The creatures are considered dangerous nuisances by Waterdeep's Cellarers' and Plumbers' Guild but are highly prized by the Guild of Apothecaries and Physicians for the pain-deadening effects of their venom.

Tree python

Medium Magical Beast
Hit Dice: 3d10+6 (22 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 16
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+6
Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d3+4)
Full Attack: Bite +6 melee (1d3+4)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d3+4, improved grab
Special Qualities: Chameleon skin, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent, spring
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2
Abilities: Str 17, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills: Balance +11, Climb +14, Hide +20, Listen +10, Spot +10, Swim +11
Feats: Alertness, Toughness
Environment: Temperate forests
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: —
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: —
Level Adjustment: —

A faint hissing sound and a slithering movement suggest the presence of an unseen serpentine predator. Suddenly, the flash of fangs from a leafy branch reveals the location of the crawling death.

Many different sorts of tree-hunting constrictors are called tree pythons, but the most numerous in Faerûn is the one native to the Serpent Hills.

The natural hue of this intelligent, tree-lurking constrictor snake is a dull, greenish-brown, but its chameleon power allows it to blend in constantly with its surroundings. Its hue alters swiftly and automatically to match its surroundings, scale by scale. Thus, its protruding head might be sky blue, its midsection the green of leaves, and its rear the brown shade of a branch. These colors alter as it moves, keeping pace with its backgrounds.

COMBAT

Tree pythons are intelligent hunters that never forget previous experiences. They are wise enough to drop onto the last creature in a passing group, choose isolated targets, and avoid falling onto glinting metal. Tree pythons usually hunt by night and sleep by day, but they have been known to follow promising prey tirelessly, keeping pace and attacking it later while it slumbers.

Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a tree python deals 1d3+4 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a tree python must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Chameleon Scales (Ex): Because of its ever-changing scales, a tree python blends in with its surroundings, gaining a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

Spring (Ex): A tree python can gather its coils and then launch itself in a jump. The Jump DCs for both long jumps and high jumps are halved, and no running start is required. Furthermore, when jumping down, the tree python takes damage as if it had dropped 90 fewer feet than it actually did.

Skills: In addition to the racial skill bonuses noted for all snakes above, a tree python has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

IN THE REALMS

Though they are most common in the Serpent Hills, tree pythons have spread quickly throughout Faerûn. They seize any opportunity to drop onto a passing wagon, "ride" cargo lashed to packbeasts, and even cling to ropes with their jaws so as to be dragged along. Some have even ridden the harnesses of flying steeds in this manner. Tree pythons don't seem to suffer any pain or disability from holding on with their jaws for hours or even days, though extreme cold causes them to drop off and search for warmer surroundings.

Tree pythons are smart enough to know when they're vulnerable. When wounded or in an exposed position, they seek to flee and hide rather than face certain death.

whipsnake

Medium Animal
Hit Dice: 3d8+6 (19 hp)
Initiative: +3
Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Armor Class: 16 (+3 Dex, +3 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 13
Base Attack/Grapple: +2/+5
Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d3+4)
Full Attack: Bite +5 melee (1d3+4)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Coil slam 1d4 (see text), constrict 1d6+4, improved grab
Special Qualities: Low-light vision, scent
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +2
Abilities: Str 17, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 2
Skills: Balance +11, Climb +14, Hide +10, Listen +7, Spot +7, Swim +11
Feats: Alertness, Toughness
Environment: Temperate marshes
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 2
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always neutral
Advancement: 4–6 HD (Medium); 7–9 HD (Large)
Level Adjustment: —

An up-and-down, whiplike motion reveals the presence of a brown, serpentine creature moving through the marshland.

This slender constrictor snake sometimes moves through tangled growth or across mud or quicksand by flailing its coils in the rapid, arching, wriggling movement from which it gained its name. This creature is unrelated to the similar but smaller snakes that live in the deserts and warm plains, and the so-called striped whipsnakes that don't constrict.

A whipsnake's scales are primarily brown, with a mottling of deep green and black. Its head is angular and broad.

Combat

Whipsnakes usually lurk on sturdy tree branches, ready to drop or slither onto creatures passing underneath. However, they have also been known to lie on the ground, stretched across a trail amid fallen tree branches, waiting to coil around the legs of creatures using the path and trip them. A whipsnake's first attack is always a coil slam.

Coil Slam (Ex): A whipsnake can whip its body against an opponent (+5 melee), dealing 1d4 points of damage on a successful hit. In addition, the target must make a DC 12 Reflex save to escape the coils. Failure means the opponent lands prone in its square, and the whipsnake automatically establishes a hold on it and can constrict as if it had made a successful grapple check.

Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a whipsnake deals 1d6+4 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a whipsnake must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Skills: In addition to the racial skill bonuses noted for all snakes above, a whipsnake has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

In the Realms

Whipsnakes are common in the Serpent Hills area of Faerûn and are rapidly spreading to other regions as well. They have resilient scales that don't dry out after they are shed, so their hides are often salvaged for use in covering belts, purses, and as trim for clothing. Most "serpent-scale" fabric consists of whipsnake-hide that has been oiled, painted, and then heated to bake the painted hues and oiled iridescence into the scales.

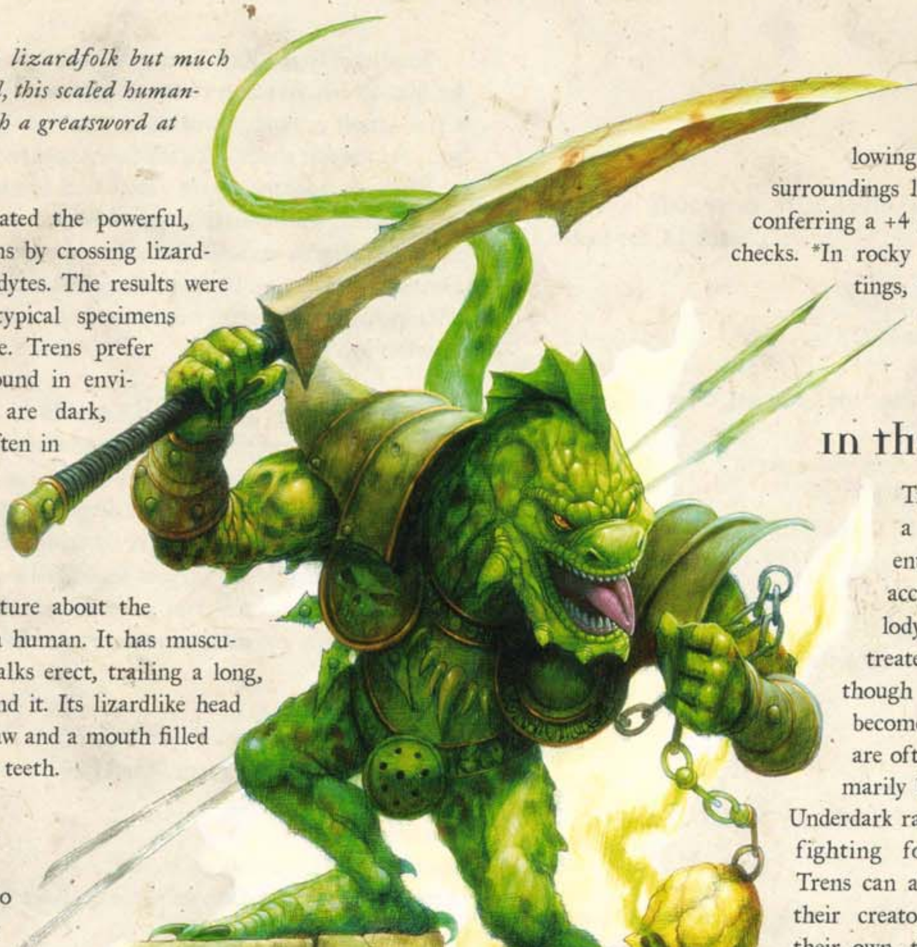
Tren

Medium Humanoid (Aquatic, Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 4d8+8 (26 hp)
Initiative: +5
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), swim 40 ft.
Armor Class: 21 (+1 Dex, +8 natural, +2 leather armor), touch 11, flat-footed 20
Base Attack/Grapple: +3/+5
Attack: Greatsword +5 melee (2d6+3/19–20) or claw +5 melee (1d4+2) or longbow +4 ranged (1d8/×3)
Full Attack: Greatsword +5 melee (2d6+3/19–20) and bite +3 melee (1d6+1) or 2 claws +5 melee (1d4+2) and bite +3 melee (1d6+1) or longbow +4 ranged (1d8/×3)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Stench
Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft.
Saves: Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +1
Abilities: Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14 , Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 10
Skills: Hide +3*, Move Silently +4, Spot +2, Swim +10
Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Multiattack^{B}
Environment: Temperate aquatic
Organization: Solitary, pair, gang (3–5), band (6–10 plus 50% noncombatants and 1 leader of 3rd–6th level), or tribe (30–60 plus 2 lieutenants of 3rd–6th level and 1 leader of 4th–10th level)
Challenge Rating: 3
Treasure: 50% coins, standard goods, 50% items
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +3

Resembling a lizardfolk but much more powerful, this scaled humanoid stands with a greatsword at the ready.

The yuan-ti created the powerful, semi-aquatic trens by crossing lizardfolk with troglodytes. The results were stronger than typical specimens from either race. Trens prefer to live underground in environments that are dark, cold, and wet, often in the same settlements with troglodytes.

A tren is a lizardlike creature about the same height as a human. It has muscular limbs and walks erect, trailing a long, slender tail behind it. Its lizardlike head features a wide jaw and a mouth filled with razor-sharp teeth.



Tren

Illustration by Wayne England

Combat

Trens prefer to wear light armor and use steel weapons. Their melee weapon of choice is the greatsword, though most also carry longbows for striking from a distance. Though they prefer melee combat to ranged, they typically attack in organized formations, adjusting their tactics to suit their environment. Because they almost never possess magic, one or two archers normally stay behind the fighters to distract spellcasters.

Stench (Ex): When a tren is angry or frightened, it secretes an oily, musklike chemical that nearly every form of animal life finds offensive. Every living creature (except other trens and troglodytes) within 30 feet of a tren must succeed on a DC 14 Fortitude save or be sickened for 10 rounds. A creature subjected to stench from multiple trens makes only one saving throw, though a separate save is necessary for any troglodyte stench present. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by the same tren's stench for 24 hours. A *delay poison* or *neutralize poison* spell removes the effect. Creatures immune to poison are unaffected, and a creature resistant to poison receives its normal bonus on the saving throw.

Skills: The scales of a tren can change color, allowing it to blend in with its surroundings like a chameleon and conferring a +4 racial bonus on Hide checks. *In rocky or subterranean settings, this bonus improves to +8.

In the Realms

Trens can be found in a number of different locations. They are accepted in many troglodyte communities and treated as equals there, although they almost never become tribal leaders. They are often kept as slaves, primarily by illithids and other Underdark races that need guards, fighting forces, or assassins. Trens can also be found serving their creators, the yuan-ti. On their own, they sometimes form small mercenary bands or raiding parties.

Yuan-ti Holy Guardian

Medium Monstrous Humanoid

Hit Dice: 8d8+16 (52 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.

Armor Class: 20 (+1 Dex, +7 natural, +2 masterwork heavy shield), touch 11, flat-footed 19

Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+12

Attack: Masterwork scimitar +12 melee (1d6+2/18–20) or masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str bonus) + 9 ranged (1d8+4/×3)

Full Attack: Masterwork scimitar +12/+7 melee (1d6+4/18–20) and bite +5 melee (1d6+2 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str bonus) + 9/+4 ranged (1d8+4/×3)

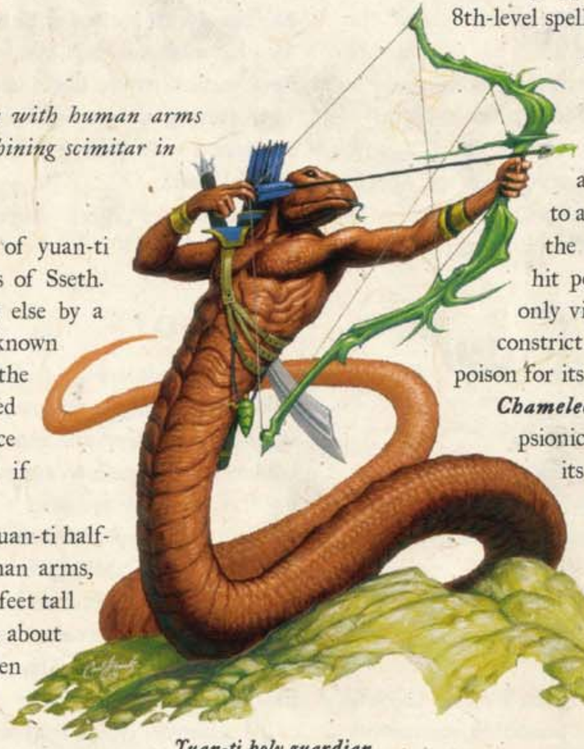
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.

Special Attacks: Constrict 1d6+6, improved grab, poison, spell-like abilities, *venomous tentacles*

Special Qualities: *Alternate form, chameleon power*, darkvision 60 ft., *detect poison*, scent, spell resistance 18

Saves: Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +10
Abilities: Str 19, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 19, Wis 19, Cha 17
Skills: Climb +11, Concentration +13, Craft (any) +16, Hide +10, Knowledge (religion) +15, Listen +17, Spot +17, Swim +10
Feats: Alertness^B, Blind-Fight^B, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility
Environment: Warm forests
Organization: Solitary, pair, gang (3–4), or guard detail (3–12)
Challenge Rating: 8
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +6

A sinuous, snakelike creature with human arms sways hypnotically, raising a shining scimitar in its defense.



Yuan-ti holy guardian

Illustration by Carl Frank

The holy guardian is rare kind of yuan-ti bred to guard temples and altars of Sseth. Unless ordered to do something else by a yuan-ti cleric of Sseth personally known to them, holy guardians defend the sacred places and property placed in their trust with alert diligence and dedication—to the death if necessary.

A holy guardian resembles a yuan-ti halfblood with its serpent head, human arms, and serpent tail. It stands about 7 feet tall when rearing upright and weighs about 270 pounds. Its dark scales lighten only slightly toward the tail and are always of uniform hue, never patterned or lighter on the underbelly.

Holy guardians speak Abyssal, Common, Draconic, and Yuan-ti.

combat

A holy guardian fights cunningly, seeking cover and ceding areas as needed in order to encircle, outflank, or otherwise trap intruders.

Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a holy guardian deals 1d6+6 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a holy guardian must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 16, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*animal trance* (DC 15), *cause fear* (DC 15), *entangle* (DC 15); 3/day—*deeper darkness, dispel magic, neutralize poison* (DC 18), *resist energy* (self only), *suggestion* (DC 17); 1/day—*baleful polymorph* (DC 19; into snake form only). Caster level 11th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

Venomous Tentacles **(Sp):** Once per day, a holy guardian can produce an effect that functions like the *Evard's black tentacles* spell, except that the tentacles also deliver poison (contact, Fortitude DC 21, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con) during each round of grappling. This ability is the equivalent of an 8th-level spell.

Alternate Form **(Sp):** A holy guardian can assume the form of a Tiny to Large viper (see the Snake entry on page 280 of the *Monster Manual*) as a psionic ability. This ability is similar to a *polymorph* spell (caster level 19th), but the holy guardian doesn't regain any lost hit points by changing form and can take only viper shapes. The holy guardian loses its constrict ability in viper form but uses its own poison for its bite attack.

Chameleon Power **(Sp):** A holy guardian can psionically change the coloration of itself and its equipment to match its surroundings, gaining a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

Detect Poison **(Sp):** A holy guardian can use *detect poison* as the spell (caster level 6th) at will.

Skills: A holy guardian receives a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

A holy guardian has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

In the Realms

Holy guardians are occasionally sent on hunting expeditions to find food for clerics of Sseth or supplies for a temple, or to recover stolen temple wealth. Otherwise, they are found only in holy sites. Their typical standing orders are to capture intruders if possible so that the clergy of Sseth can interrogate them. Should capture prove infeasible, intruders are slain without hesitation.

Holy guardians are trained from hatching to obey clerics of Sseth first, and family or tribal elders second. Unlike most yuan-ti, they do not spend the majority of their time scheming against others, but they aren't stupid either. Holy guardians often discuss among themselves the prudence of (and philosophy behind) orders that they've been given, as well as the motives and worth of their superiors.

These yuan-ti disobey clerics of Sseth only when their orders are clearly against temple teachings, or foolishly endanger other clergy or holy items. If faced with conflicting orders from different clerics of Sseth, they obey the cleric they believe to be wiser or more worthy, regardless of rank.

Holy guardians are not magically or psionically compelled to obey anyone, and they are considered apart from tribal hierarchy and authority. Thus, in practice, they are "above" the orders of even tribal leaders. Holy guardians are reluctant to attack or discipline other holy guardians and refuse to do so unless they personally believe the offender has "gone rogue"—never merely because a cleric of Sseth orders it. (Such a cleric is obviously mistakenly ordering the destruction of holy property, which Sseth himself trusts and expects holy guardians to guard). A holy guardian's preferred class is yuan-ti cultist (see *Savage Species*).

Yuan-ti Mageslayer

Medium Monstrous Humanoid
Hit Dice: 8d8+16 (40 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares), climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.
Armor Class: 18 (+1 Dex, +7 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 17
Base Attack/Grapple: +8/+12
Attack: Masterwork short sword +13 melee (1d6+6/19–20) or masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str bonus) + 10 ranged (1d8+4/×3)
Full Attack: Masterwork short sword +13/+8 melee (1d6+6/19–20) and bite +5 melee (1d6+2 plus poison) or masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str bonus) + 10/+5 ranged (1d8+4/×3)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Constrict 1d6+6, improved grab, poison, spell-like abilities, *venomous tentacles*
Special Qualities: *Alternate form, chameleon power,* darkvision 60 ft., *detect poison,* scent, spell resistance 20
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +10
Abilities: Str 19, Dex 13, Con 15, Int 19, Wis 19, Cha 17
Skills: Climb +12, Concentration +13, Craft (any) +15, Hide +12, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Listen +17, Spot +17, Swim +12
Feats: Alertness^B, Blind-Fight^B, Combat Expertise, Eschew Materials, Still Spell
Environment: Warm forests
Organization: Solitary, pair, gang (3–4), or guard detail (3–12)
Challenge Rating: 9
Treasure: Double standard
Alignment: Usually chaotic evil
Advancement: By character class (sorcerer preferred)
Level Adjustment: +6

A serpent with human arms and a human head rears back, its serpent eyes glittering with malice. A streak of eldritch energy streams from its outstretched finger.

Mageslayers were bred by certain yuan-ti elders concerned about the rising magical vigor of humans in Faerûn. Believing that the vrael olo needed their own spellcasters to effectively fight the menace stemming from "every stinking Scaleless One having spells enough to blast down scores of us," they produced a kind of yuan-ti with innate spell ability.

A mageslayer looks like a slightly larger version of a yuan-ti halfblood with human arms and a serpent tail. A typical specimen has a human head, though its tongue is forked and its eyes have vertical pupils, like a serpent's. It stands about 7 feet tall when rearing upright and weighs about 270 pounds. Mageslayers have a wide variety of scale patterning and hues in their natural states.

Mageslayers speak Abyssal, Common, Draconic, and Yuan-ti.

Combat

Yuan-ti mageslayers are trained for spell battles by the Coiled Cabal even if they aren't members, and they thoroughly understand the side effects and unorthodox uses of their spells. They're used to hurling spells so as not to endanger allies in a fast-moving fray, and they are quick to set up traps and take advantage of cover and deception where possible.

The Coiled Cabal teaches that a mageslayer life lost is a "wound felt by all vrael olo," a waste that weakens the race and must therefore be avoided. As cabal leaders put it, "A valiant hero is a human fool." Thus, a mageslayer saves its own scales first, fleeing to fight another day.

Mageslayers typically arrange ambushes so their *dimension door* abilities can whisk them to a waiting boat, inaccessible cave mouth, balcony, or cliffside ledge for easy escape should a fight go against them. Though ruthless in battle, they follow orders when it comes to capturing prisoners alive, recovering items, and avoiding damage to the surroundings. Like other yuan-ti, they admire the skulker more than the tower-toppling *fireball*-hurler.

Constrict (Ex): On a successful grapple check, a mageslayer deals 1d6+6 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, a mageslayer must hit with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 16, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*animal trance* (DC 15), *cause fear* (DC 15), *conceal thoughts* (self only), *entangle* (DC 15); 3/day—*deeper darkness, greater dispel magic, neutralize poison* (DC 18), *protection from energy* (self only), *suggestion* (DC 17);

1/day—*baleful polymorph* (DC 19; into snake form only), *dimensional anchor* (DC 15), *dimension door* (self and equipment only), *protection from spells*. Caster level 14th. The save DCs are Charisma-based.

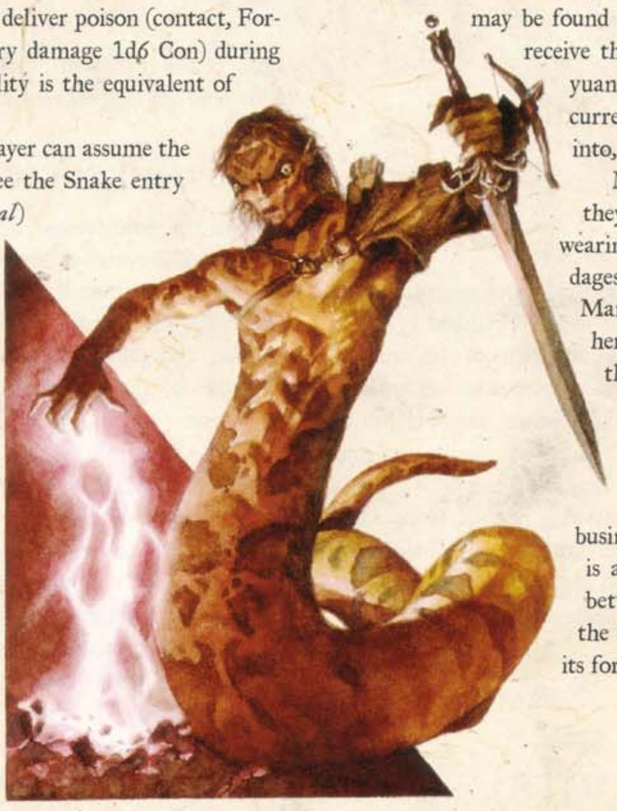
Spells: A yuan-ti mageslayer casts arcane spells as an 8th-level sorcerer, but its effective caster level is 14th. It may not take any spellcasting prestige class.

Typical Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/7/6/3; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*acid splash, arcane mark, dancing lights, detect magic, mage hand, message, open/close, read magic;* 1st—*alarm, burning hands, disguise self, mage armor, unseen servant;* 2nd—*bull's strength, cat's grace, invisibility;* 3rd—*dispel magic, fireball;* 4th—*scrying.*

***Venomous Tentacles* (Sp):** Once per day, a mageslayer can produce an effect that functions like the *Evard's black tentacles* spell, except that the tentacles also deliver poison (contact, Fortitude DC 21, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con) during each round of grappling. This ability is the equivalent of an 8th-level spell.

***Alternate Form* (Sp):** A mageslayer can assume the form of a Tiny to Large viper (see the Snake entry on page 280 of the *Monster Manual*) as a psionic ability. This ability is similar to a *polymorph* spell (caster level 19th), but the mageslayer doesn't regain any lost hit points by changing form and can assume only viper shapes. The mageslayer loses its constrict ability in viper form but uses its own poison for its bite attack.

***Chameleon Power* (Sp):** A mageslayer can psionically change the coloration of itself and its equipment to match its surroundings, gaining a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks. Mageslayers can control this power far more precisely than other yuan-ti, and they often use it to make a "badge" appear on their scales when participating in complex battles or missions, or to shift the hues of their scales so as to give mute signals (agreed-upon beforehand with their fellows), such as "Enemy near," or "I sense magic."



Yuan-ti mageslayer

Illustration by Jeremy Jarvis

***Detect Poison* (Sp):** A holy guardian can use *detect poison* as the spell (caster level 6th) at will.

Skills: A mageslayer receives a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always choose to take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

A mageslayer has a +8 racial bonus on any Swim check to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. It can always choose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if distracted or endangered. It can use the run action while swimming, provided it swims in a straight line.

In the Realms

Yuan-ti mageslayers are the "strike leaders" of the Coiled Cabal. Thanks to the wide variety of cabal missions and interests, they may be found anywhere in Faerûn. They always receive the best of intelligence from other yuan-ti about the laws, politics, and current events of any area they venture into, and they behave accordingly.

Mageslayers often "hide" when they must go among humans by wearing plate armor or extensive bandages that leave their heads exposed. Many pretend to be mortally wounded heroes kept alive magically so that they can ride home to die.

Mageslayers are often sent to deal with humanoid spellcasters who are harming or threatening vrael olo or their intrigues and businesses. At least one mageslayer is always present at any open battle between humans and yuan-ti in which the scaly side has had time to prepare its forces.

REALMS

Faerûn's serpent kingdoms and scalykind realms run the gamut from desolate swamps claimed by small bands of lizardfolk to the remnants of the vast and decadent empire of the yuan-ti. This chapter describes some of the most notorious, important, and incredible realms of Scaled Ones. In many of these areas, Scaled Ones rule openly, not from the shadows as they do in Faerûn's humanoid cities.

Creatures marked MM2 in the following text are from *Monster Manual II*, and those marked FF are from the *Fiend Folio*. All other creatures are described in the *Monster Manual*, the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*, or *Monster Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn*.

Hlondeth (City of Serpents)

Capitol: Hlondeth
Population: 453,600 (humans 84% [Chondathans 56%, Turami 41%, Shaarans 3%], kobolds 15%, yuan-ti 1%)
Government: Monarchy
Religions: Cult of the Dragon, Ilmater, Llira, Talona, Talos, Tempus, Tyr, Varae (Sseth [now Set])
Imports: Slaves, timber, weapons
Exports: Basalt, green marble, seafood, statuary, wines
Alignment: N, LN, LG, LE, NE, CE

The City of Serpents lies on the northern shore of the Vilhon Reach, opposite Sespech, in the shadow of Mount Ugruth. This port city is linked to Alaghôn via the Halondar, and to Ormath via the Pikeman's Folly. Hlondeth claims all the lands within 50 miles of the city's walls, including a dozen or so minor villages and seemingly endless vineyards.

Life and Society

Despite the omnipresent influence of the serpentfolk, life in the City of Serpents is not unlike that in other cities along the shores of the Vilhon Reach. Trade is king, ritualized combat is glorified, nature (particularly all things serpentine) is accorded its due, and arcane spellcasters are regarded with suspicion. Members of the kobold underclass are treated as either slaves or vermin.

Hlondeth is ruled with a light hand by Dediana Extaminos (LE female halfblood yuan-ti sorcerer 10), the matriarch of House Extaminos, who has a snake's tail and no legs. Her current mate is First Consort Ssibalentanamas (CE spirit naga cleric 11 of Sseth [now Set]), also known as First Keeper of the Sacred Eggs. Ssibalentanamas slithers through the length and breadth of Hlondeth's catacombs, guarding yuan-ti brood chambers.

Dediana's heir is Dmetrio Extaminos (LE male pureblood yuan-ti fighter 7), who is affianced to Glsena Foesmasher, eldest daughter of Baron Thuragar of Sespech. Besides serving as Hlondeth's ambassador to Sespech, Dmetrio secretly leads the Hlondethan cell of the Cult of the Dragon. He uses the cult to undermine his mother's rule and increase his personal power so that he can one day seize control of Hlondeth and the surrounding region. A recent attempt to extend the cell's influence to Surkh failed, thanks to the Cult of Tiamat active in that city. The Hlondethan cell has been far more successful creating urbroodguards (broodguards with the dread warrior template plus one or more levels of barbarian).

Major Geographical Features

The area around the City of Serpents is particularly rugged.

Churning Bay: The city of Hlondeth lies at the head of a froth-filled, narrow gulf. Its powerful tides challenge even skilled navigators except at slack tide. Numerous wrecks line the floor of Churning Bay, attracting brave explorers who are willing to risk the dangerous waters.

Mount Ugruth: This long-smoldering volcano looms high above the City of Serpents. Despite a few rumbles in the Year of the Serpent (1359 DR), Mount Ugruth has not erupted since the Year of the Speaking Mountain (257 DR). Nevertheless, the recent volcanic activity was sufficient to briefly open a *portal* to the Elemental Plane of Fire and release dozens of magmins into the volcano's steaming heart. Some of these creatures emerge to cause havoc in the surrounding area from time to time. At the base of the volcano is a prominent Talassan temple called the Sacellum of Slumbering Fire.

Southsands: This beach south of Hlondeth is the site of quadrennial mock wars between representatives of Turmish and Chondath. The winner of this Shieldmeet contest, which dates back to the Year of the Late Sun (300 DR), receives certain trading privileges, initial resource claims, and a tithe of slaves.

important sites

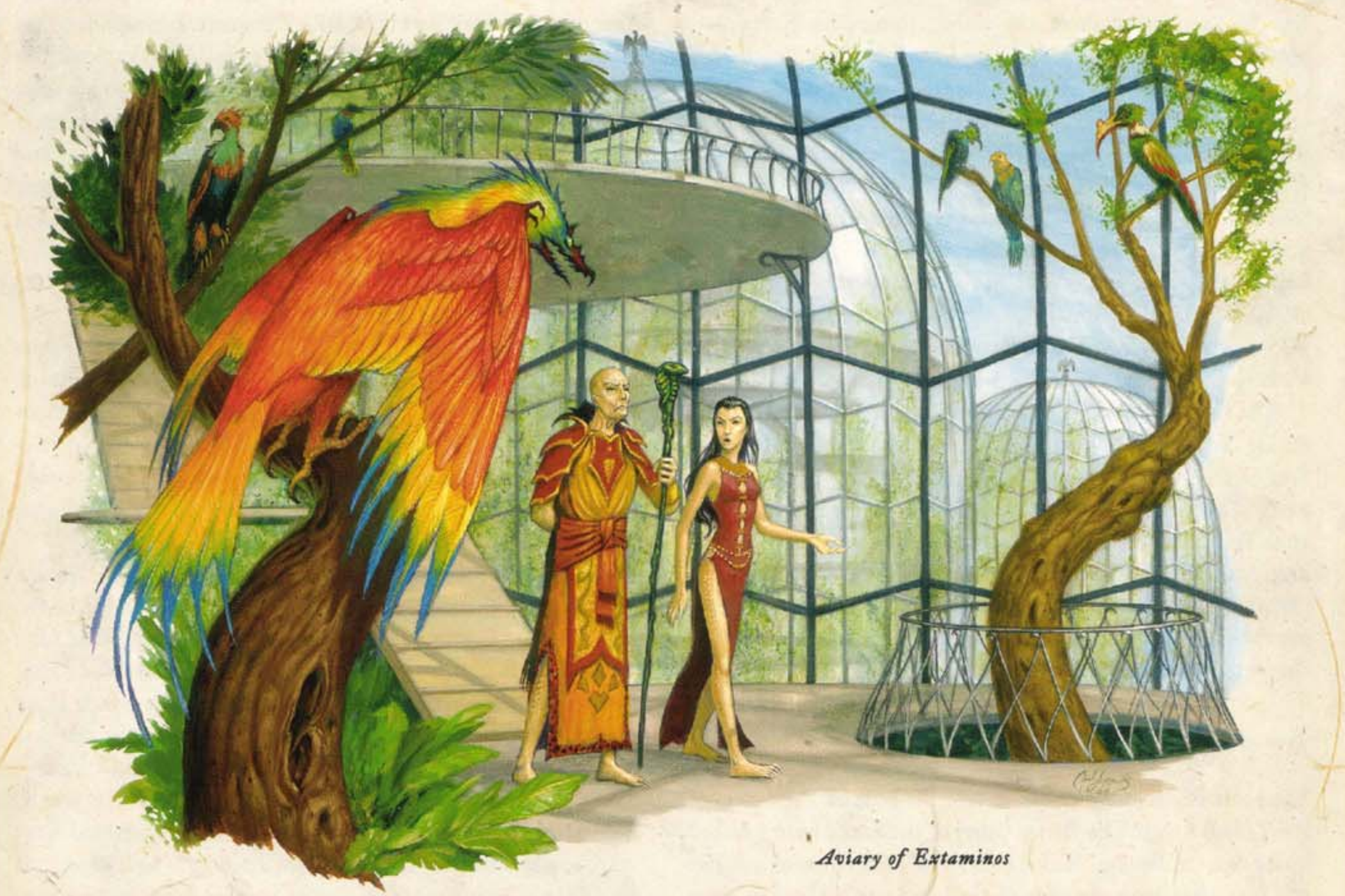
Hlondeth has been the recipient of some of the most beautiful art and architecture that the yuan-ti have ever produced.

Aviary of Extaminos: This great aviary, which took nearly two decades to construct, is now home to all manner of exotic birds, most of them native to the Black or Mhair Jungles. Because many of these birds are quite dangerous, visitors must submit to a *protection from avians* spell before entering. Senior members of House Extaminos are secretly permitted to hunt within the aviary when the facility is closed.

Cathedral of Emerald Scales: Dedicated to Varae, a beast cult power of snakes and aspect of Sseth, the Cathedral of Emerald Scales thoroughly dominates the religious, political, and architectural life of Hlondeth. Constructed over the course of thirteen centuries by the Extaminos family, the structure served first as the family villa and then as a small shrine to Ilmater on the periphery of the family compound. When the Extaminos family shifted its allegiance to Varae's cult, its members expanded the shrine into a small chapel and reconsecrated it. Although nearly everyone in Hlondeth realizes that Varae is simply an aspect of the yuan-ti god Sseth, the priests of the cathedral still maintain the façade of venerating Varae.

The leader of Varae's clergy is Emerald Boa of the Vilhon Medusanna Mhairdaul (CE female yuan-ti abomination cleric 17 of Sseth [Set]) of the Se'Sehen tribe, whose human head sports countless poisonous snakes in lieu of hair. Medusanna personally loathes the relatively cold climate of Hlondeth, the city's inhabitants, and House Extaminos, and the feeling is reciprocated. This mutual dislike only exacerbates the already high tensions between the Se'Sehen tribe and the ruling family of Hlondeth. The Knights of the Forked Tongue defend the temple, and the clergy consists of ophidians, yuan-ti purebloods, tainted ones, and halfbloods.

Illustration by Carl Frank



Aviary of Extaminos

The Wall of the Amphisbaena encircles the temple. This defensive barricade was sculpted in the form of a giant, two-headed snake, with the two heads serving as gate towers. Within the wall lies the Shrouded Jungle, a mist-shrouded fragment of the Black Jungles that is much larger than the space would apparently permit. At its heart is the Emerald Canopy, a semitranslucent hemisphere of emerald marble and steel-hard green glass that sits atop of the Forest of Serpents—a thicket of columns carved to resemble intertwined snakes. A giant constrictor snake carved from serpentine stone wraps its coils around the entire dome. Bejeweled statuary and guardian jaculi fill the Forest of Serpents, and the whole area is inundated with constant rain. Just north of the Emerald Canopy stands Semorav's Tower, home to Semorav of the Cobra's Hood (LE male pureblood yuan-ti necromancer 14).

A massive, open pit in the center of the cathedral leads down to the armories, brood chambers, laboratories, prison pantries, and residences below.

Hlondeth (Metropolis, 45,360): Towering walls of emerald marble encircle the city, and its architecture is marked by tall, graceful arches and coils of verdant stone. Ramps and poles have replaced stairs, and at night, the city glows green because of the interaction between magical lighting and the emerald-hued stone.

Scaled Halls of Varae: In the deepest catacombs beneath Hlondeth lies an ancient temple, built when one of the Twelve Cities of the Sword stood here on the shores of Jhaamdath Bay. In the early days of the realm, Jhaamdathan explorers brought back the worship of Varae from the Black Jungles and constructed the Scaled Halls of Varae—a nearly identical copy of the Pit of Vipers in the ruins of Ss'inthee'ssaree. The temple was abandoned after the destruction of Jhaamdath in the Year of Furious Waves (–255 DR), only to be rediscovered centuries later (after 527 DR) by the scions of House Extaminos. The Scaled Halls have been largely neglected since House Extaminos began openly ruling Hlondeth in the Year of Smoldering Spells (1020 DR). It is now visited only by complacent state clerics who are more loyal to House Extaminos than to the yuan-ti as a whole.

The Serpent Sibyl (see page 140), chosen avatar of Sseth during Time of Troubles, appeared in the Scaled Halls in the Year of the Wild Magic (1372 DR). Since then, she has built up a cult of serpentfolk followers who worship at the long-neglected altar. So powerful has her cult become that she now schemes to unite yuan-ti holdings across Faerûn into a grand empire on a par with Mhairshaulk at its height. The Sibyl's Chosen are growing rapidly in strength and number, and they may soon pose a threat to the primacy of House Extaminos.

Regional History

The heart of ancient Jhaamdath now lies beneath the waters of the Vilhon Reach. The Twelve Cities of the Sword were smashed in the Year of Furious Waves (–255 DR), after Jhaamdath Bay was inundated by a gargantuan tidal wave raised by the elven High Mages of Nikerymath (now the Chondalwood). This event reshaped the coastline into the contours of the Vilhon Reach known today.

The survivors attempted to refound the realm in the wake of Jhaamdath's fall, but such efforts faltered in the face of continued skirmishing with the elves of Nikerymath. Most of the surviving humans migrated north across the Sea of Fallen Stars to settle the lands along the southern slopes of the Earthfast Mountains. The first of these settlements was Proeskampalar (later Procampur), founded in the Year of the Starry Shroud (–153 DR).

The founding of Iljak in the Year of Fallen Fury (20 DR) marked the end of the large-scale Jhaamdathan exodus and the beginning of efforts to build a human realm along the shores of the Vilhon Reach. By 50 DR, humanity had founded the cities of Arrabar, Asple, Daroush, Mussum, Samra, and Torl. The port city of Hlondeth was founded in the Year of Dark Venom (37 DR), at the western end of the Turmway (now known as the Halondar) from Alaghôn. Such Vilhonese efforts nearly came to naught when plague wracked the Vilhon Reach in the Year of Clinging Death (75 DR), killing more than half of the population in less than a decade.

For nearly a century, Hlondeth was ruled by a succession of warlords from House Gestin. During this period, the humans of House Extaminos rose to prominence, quarrying green marble from the Osraun Mountains and trading it at ports throughout the Vilhon Reach and the rest of the Sea of Fallen Stars. In the Year of the Pirates' Port (145 DR), Dempster Turmish marched Alaghôn's armies down the Turmway to besiege Hlondeth. The city's ruling warlord prevailed by enlisting various pirate ships to attack Alaghôn's navy in exchange for the promise of a safe port. This tactic enabled the city to bring in supplies by sea and thereby outlast the besieging army. Hlondeth defeated Dempster Turmish again the following year, thanks to the invoker Riliton Mandleweave and the Company of the Howling Harpoon. A third attack planned for the Year of the Lost Library (150 DR) collapsed after the death of Dempster Turmish.

The century that followed is known as the Calmwaters because civilization in Turmish and along the Vilhon Reach flourished during this period. The increased trade throughout the Reach greatly enhanced the fortunes of the human Extaminos clan, and a succession of Extaminos patriarchs slowly expanded their primary villa, transforming the original manor house into an opulent shrine to Ilmater.

In the Year of the Speaking Mountain (257 DR), Mount Ugruth erupted, and the resultant popular backlash led to the fall of House Gestin. But before House Extaminos could seize power in Hlondeth, House Illistine, whose members ruled Chondath, seized the so-called jewel of the Vilhon. For nearly three centuries, House Illistine ruled Hlondeth as well as the rest of the Vilhon Reach, while House Extaminos turned inward, focusing on trade and hedonistic pastimes. During this period, the Extaminos compound was ringed in a wall of emerald-hued marble, and Ilmater's shrine was encircled by a lush garden of exotic plants harvested from distant jungles. Small outbuildings throughout the walled compound house a menagerie of exotic beasts—primarily reptiles.

In the Year of the Tatters (527 DR), Hlondeth was besieged by kobolds of the Tattered Cloth Legion that had been secretly dispatched by Nathglaryst, drow queen of Undraeth. The rulers of Chondath did nothing, but Lord Shevron Extaminos welcomed all who managed to escape the kobold army into his family's compound. During the subsequent siege, Shevron received a vision from Ilmater that caused him to dispatch swarms of "pet" snakes from his gardens against the kobolds, routing Nathglaryst's host. Shevron himself was killed in the battle, but no defender of House Extaminos was slain by the serpents.

After Lord Shevron's death, House Extaminos reawakened from its centuries-long indolence and lethargy. Many of the younger family members began adventuring in the long-neglected sewers of Hlondeth, ostensibly seeking their escaped "pets" and the connection to the Underdark through which the kobold army had gained access to the city. In the city's catacombs, the young Extaminos nobles uncovered a long-forgotten temple of Varae, as well as Lord Sheveron's lost army of snakes.

Discounting the former lord's dedication to Ilmater, the next generation of House Extaminos began to resurrect the long-dormant cult of Varae. Following ancient rituals described on tablets in the temple's vaults, the humans of House Extaminos made contact with the Se'Sehen tribe via an ancient *portal* network linking the Scaled Halls of Varae to the Pit of Vipers in the ruins of Ss'inthee'ssaree. After forging an alliance with the serpentfolk there, they began to interbreed with Se'Sehen in the nearby Osraun Mountains in an attempt to literally join with the snakes they venerated. They also began secretly extending their family's political influence through all levels of the government's hierarchy. Eventually, they acquired enough influence to engineer a series of rebellions against Chondath's unwanted rule. Hlondeth finally regained its independence in the Year of the Shattered Scepter (614 DR).

While House Extaminos did not directly seize power in Hlondeth after Chondath's governor was overthrown, its members ruled from behind the throne for the next four centuries. Within a decade of Hlondeth's reclaimed independence, Ilmater's shrine in the Extaminos family compound was renamed the Chapel of Emerald Scales and consecrated to Varae. Hlondeth's citizens accepted this alteration with little fuss, since House Extaminos was still highly regarded for its past beneficence and bravery.

In the Year of Smoldering Spells (1020 DR), House Extaminos began openly ruling Hlondeth with little opposition. By this time, the aboveground temple of Varae had been expanded fivefold, the adjoining compound of House Extaminos had sprawled throughout much of the noble's district, and the bloodline of the ancient ruling house had become fully and completely yuan-ti. From this point forward, House Extaminos was considered a great yuan-ti tribe in its own right, wholly distinct from the Se'Sehen tribe, with the city-state of Hlondeth firmly constricted in its coils.

Plots and Rumors

Hlondeth has always been a hotbed of yuan-ti intrigue. The following plot is only one of many that can be investigated here.

Plague of Serpents: Leaders of the Plague-Mother's Children, a human cult based in Hlondeth and dedicated to Talona, have forged an alliance with the Sibyl's Chosen. Together, the two groups aim to create tainted ones on a vast scale. Dediana Extaminos is working in secret to oppose their plot, fearing the power it would give the Serpent Sibyl. The Serpent's Secession, a secret society of humans led by Gonthril Astinar (NG male Chondathan human fighter 7/rogue 5) also opposes the plot, since its members are sworn to actively resist the spreading influence of the serpentfolk.

Isstosseffifil (Land of the Lost Sea)

Capitol: Crypts of Oreme
Population: 12,404 (asabis 52%, stingtails 47.5%, sarrukh liches 0.5%)
Government: Rotating monarchy/*de facto* oligarchy
Religions: Semuanya (asabis, stingtails), Sseth ([now Set] sarrukh)
Imports: Realmslore
Exports: Asabi mercenaries, stingtail mercenaries
Alignment: LE, NE

The sarrukh empire of Isstosseffifil is all but gone. Its ancient secrets were destroyed by the phaerimms and the folly of the Isstossef (as the inhabitants were known), scattered by the Netherese, and buried by the drifting sands of Anauroch. In its heyday, the Land of the Lost Sea ran along the eastern shores of the old Narrow Sea, encompassing the fertile lands that stretched from what is now the Saiyaddar to the High Ice and from the water's edge to the Plain of Standing Stones. Today, all that remains of this once-great empire is the buried city of Oreme.

Life and Society

The sixty sarrukh liches of Oreme are ancient even by the standards of most undead. Only one, always known as King Oreme, is awake at any given time to fulfill the duties of monarch. The remainder lie in repose in the Crypt of Dreaming Lizards, dreaming of lands long lost and awaiting their turns to rule. Ancient *contingency* spells ensure that all the liches wake up if any real danger threatens the city, or if the currently awake lich is destroyed or incapacitated. The current ruler can also awaken all of his companions at once with a single mental command.

The current King Oreme spends his time in much the same way as his predecessors did, scrying events of interest to reptiles in Faerûn and recording his observations in the city's vast library. The asabis that guard the city are largely left to rule themselves, although the currently awake lich can be persuaded to intervene if the tribal council cannot reach agreement about an issue.

The asabis and stingtails that make up the vast majority of the population are organized into tribal mercenary companies. Each tribe is controlled by an asabi chief, who gains control by allying with the tribe's most powerful stingtails. All the chiefs serve on the Council of Chiefs, which answers only to King Oreme.

The liches of Oreme keep only enough asabis and stingtails in the city to ensure its defense and maintain a viable breeding population. Excess tribes are dispatched into Faerûn with instructions to support themselves by any means necessary (usually mercenary work) and ensure a steady flow of news reports back to the capitol.

Major Geographical Features

Though not completely featureless, the area where the Isstosseffifil Empire once stood now appears largely lifeless and barren.

The Frozen Sea: During the Days of Thunder, the old Narrow Sea ran like a sword along the eastern flanks of the Greypeak Mountains, stretching from the future site of the dwarven seaport Ascore to the city of Oreme, but the sea was never more than 100 miles in width. After the Isstossef reshaped the land in their war with the phaerimms, the Narrow Sea flowed from west to east, stretching from what would become Ascore to the Tortured Lands.

After countless millennia, little evidence remains of the terrain-shaping magic employed by the sarrukh. The icy dunes of the Frozen Sea on the western border of Anauroch—the result of rainfall that runs down the eastern slopes of the Greypeaks and freezes—give mute evidence of the ancient sea that once lay here.

Today, the Frozen Sea is a breeding ground for many birds in the spring, but it is otherwise almost empty of inhabitants. Only those foolish enough to search out the lost cities of Anarath, Ascore (seaport of dwarven Delzoun), Bhaulaea, Hlaungadath (a crashed Netherese floating city), and Oreme ever come here.

The Phaerlin: The Buried Realms of Anauroch are the dominion of the phaerimms, and those who can resist the master of the Phaerlin are few and far between. The deepest catacombs of Oreme connect directly with the Underdark and have been the site of repeated battles between the asabis of Oreme and the mind-slaves of the phaerimms. Long ago, the sarrukh liches erected a barrier around Oreme similar to the Sharnwall. Thus far, the barrier has prevented the phaerimms from directly invading the city, but the wards do not prevent the passage of other races, including the thornbacks' minions. Elsewhere in the Phaerlin, asabi tribes dominate the catacombs beneath the ruined city of Rasilith and the caverns beneath Azirrhat. The former group is under the direct control of the phaerimms, while the latter is nominally free but secretly controlled by the phaerimms.

Important Sites

Only ruins now break the landscape of this bleak region. Some of those ruins, however, are rich enough to result in a steady stream of adventurers.

Anarath: The ruined City of Statues lies in the northern reaches of the Frozen Sea, in the shadow of the High Ice. Abandoned in the dying days of Isstosseffifil, Anarath was picked over by early Netherese explorers. Today, it is the haunt of Iymrith (female ancient blue dragon sorcerer 7), the Doom of the Desert. Iymrith does not know the name of the city in which she lairs, but she has found the accommodations suitable. No one dwells in Anarath except the dragon, her legion of gargoyle constructs, and the Company of Flame Spiders (an enslaved Athkatlan adventuring company that the dragon uses to explore nearby Netherese ruins). In recent years, word of Anarath's discovery has reached the serpentfolk of Najara, and they have begun making regular pilgrimages to this ancient ruin. Since none have dared enter the city so far, Iymrith tolerates their offerings, just as she does those of certain Bedine tribes.

Bhaulaea: In the western reaches of the High Ice, near the old bed of the Narrow Sea, lies the ruined City in Ice. Abandoned by the sarrukh during their war with the phaerimms, it now lies encased in glacial ice at the bottom of the High Ice, forgotten by all except the liches of Oreme. Unless the denizens of Shade resume the melting of the High Ice, the only way to reach Bhaulaea is an ancient *portal* that links the ruins of Ss'yin'tia'saminass with an intact remnant of the city preserved in a bubble of glacial ice. Since the *portal* key to return differs from the one needed to reach the City in Ice, however, would-be explorers who do not take special precautions are usually trapped there. The frozen corpses of seven yuan-ti and their deinonychus steeds in the center of the ice cavern bear mute witness to just such a miscalculation.

Crypt of Hssthak: Hssthak (LE male sarrukh mummy sorcerer 10/archmage 5), who believes himself to be the last of the Isstossef, rests within this ancient tomb guarding two of the *Golden Skins of the World Serpent* (*Nether Scrolls*). Although his crypt has remained undiscovered for countless millennia, he waits patiently for the day that he can pass on the wisdom of the sarrukh to their lesser progeny.

Circa –6000 DR, the elves of Evereska stumbled across Hssthak's tomb and recognized the threat it posed. A half dozen elves volunteered to become mummies themselves so that they could guard the tomb for all eternity. Once they had been placed in position, the tomb was resealed and buried by elven magic. Because the crypt lay beneath otherwise unremarkable flatlands, the Netherese never chanced upon it. Recently, however, the walls of a deep sinkhole at a desert oasis on the eastern edge of the Frozen Sea crumbled, revealing the front of the ancient structure. Already a band of lizardfolk and the Company of the Golden Sands have explored parts of the tomb, so it is only a matter of time before someone recovers the powerful sarrukh magics that lie within.

Hall of Mists: In the depths of the High Forest, beneath the towering Grandfather Tree, lies a truly ancient ruin known only as the Hall of Mists. The elves who first discovered this ancient structure more than 13,000 years ago recognized it as a fell legacy of the Iqua-Tel'Quessir (creator races). So great was the evil contained within it that the elves summoned an arakhor (an Elven term that translates loosely as "one who protects the forest" or "tree warden") to guard the site. This creature, known as the Grandfather Tree, has protected the Hall of Mists ever since.

Akin in some respects to elementals, the arakhora draw life, energy, and intelligence from the forests in which they dwell and repay the debt by serving as the caretakers and guardians of these places. Writings preserved from this era by the church of Labelas Enoreth suggest that the arakhora were a form of elder treant (treat as advanced elder treant)—perhaps even the progenitors of the modern treants. With the exception of the Stone Stand cutting, the Grandfather Tree is the last known arakhor alive in Faerûn today.

Unbeknownst to anyone except the remaining sarrukh, the Hall of Mists is the ancient stronghold of the Ba'etith, an organization that began in Isstosseffifil but outlasted that empire. The group was later dominated by the sarrukh of other realms, then by the batrachi, and then by the aearee before it vanished during the waning Days of Thunder. The Ba'etith studied the primitive forms of magic practiced by the various races of Faerûn and, over thousands of years, codified them in the form of the *Golden Skins of the World Serpent*, which were later known as the *Nether Scrolls*.

Today, the Hall of Mists is infested with a colony of giant red ants that were spawned in the Year of the Fell Firebreak (883 DR) by an eddy of magical chaos emanating from Hellgate Keep. These ants opened tunnels to the Hall of Mists for the first time in eons, and at least one adventurer—Mintiper Moonsilver—has since explored the subterranean ruin. Word of this discovery has finally reached the sarrukh of Serpentes, and at least one band of yuan-ti adventurers has been dispatched to the far North to explore the site.

Oreme: The ruined City of White Towers lies some 200 miles east of the Weathercote Wood, on the edge of the empty sands of the Frozen Sea. Once a city of artisans ruled by sarrukh wizards and sorcerers, Oreme was largely abandoned during the fall of Isstosseffifil. In the bowels of the city, however, the few dozen sarrukh who chose to remain behind transformed themselves into liches and have clung ever since to the remnants of their empire, ruling the asabis who stayed behind to guard them. The rest of the asabi population from that era fled into the Underdark, only to be enslaved by the phaerimms.

The ruins of Oreme remained unknown to the surface world for more than 30,000 years after the city's towers had been buried in debris from the dustbowl that had once been the Narrow Sea. But once the phaerimms returned to the upper Underdark of the Buried Realms and began to plague the Netherese, they quickly discovered the remnants of their ancient foes. The liches of Oreme were forced to withdraw even farther behind their magical wards, conceding all but the city's catacombs and a few surrounding caverns to the minions of the phaerimms.

Regional History

During first era of the Days of Thunder (more than 35,000 years ago), the reptilian sarrukh ruled over all Faerûn. Their

Illustration by Jim Pavelec

Battle in Anarath

population was concentrated in three major empires, plus a host of lesser realms. The northernmost empire of the sarrukh was Isstosseffifil, which lay along the western edge of what is now called Anauroch. At that time, the Narrow Sea ran along the eastern slopes of the mountains known as the Greypeaks.

Like their kin in Mhairshaulk and Okoth, the Isstossef created many races in their own image. It was they who developed the asabis (also known as laertis) and stingtails, as well as other reptilian races capable of dwelling in the depths of the Underdark. During their explorations of the Realms Below, the Isstossef encountered such alien races as aboleths and phaerimms, although whether those races had dwelt there all along or were inadvertently summoned by the Isstossef remains a matter of conjecture.

The fall of Isstosseffifil dates back to an ancient war with the phaerimms, circa –33,800 DR. In an effort to drown the Phaerlin (known today as the Buried Realms) and dispatch their enemies in one masterful stroke, Isstossef wizards rerouted the Narrow Sea so that it ran from east to west, inundating the land around the chain of hills known today as the Tagorlar with water. Although the Isstossef succeeded in driving the phaerimms deep into the Underdark, the massive ecological change resulting from their weavings of the Art caused their empire to collapse.

A handful of Isstossef spellcasters embraced a form of lichdom in an effort to preserve the legacy of their empire at any cost. They then retreated into the bowels of Oreme while the empire crumbled about them. To their surprise, these few remaining Isstossef discovered that the phaerimms had not been destroyed, and they were hard pressed to erect wards around their subterranean home in time to hold off the invaders. During all the millennia since, the sarrukh liches of Oreme have observed the world around them, scrying on the activities of their progeny, without ever venturing from the confines of their ruined city. They observed the rise and fall of Netheril, the formation of the Great Desert, and most recently, the return of Shade and the sharp check dealt to the phaerimms. It is unclear what it would take to convince the remaining Isstossef to emerge from their ancient home, but if these events do not provide sufficient motivation, perhaps nothing would.

Plots and Rumors

The recent events in this area provide several interesting concepts for adventuring.

Return of the Asabis: The defeat of the phaerimms in the recent war with Shade and Evereska has released large numbers of asabis from indentured servitude. Although many of these creatures are now seeking work as mercenaries outside of Anauroch, a significant minority has begun migrating toward the Frozen Sea. Perhaps the liches of Oreme have at last summoned home their wayward progeny, or perhaps the asabis are being drawn there for some other reason. In either case, their activities are likely to draw a new wave of treasure seekers to the ancient ruins of Oreme.

Lapaliiya

Capitol: Sheirtalar

Population: 1,217,642 (humans 95% [Shaarans 50%, Calishites 36%, Tashalans 12%, Chultans 1%, Halruaans 1%], yuan-ti 2%, rock gnomes 2%, wild dwarves 1%)

Government: Limited monarchy

Religions: Amphisbaena the World Serpent (Sseth [Set]), Bhaelros (Talos), Deneir, Chauntea, Eldath, Garl Glittergold, Ilmater, Kelemvor, Lliira, Selûne, Silvanus, Tempus, Tiamat, Umberlee, Waukeen

Imports: Armor, beef, gems, fruit, iron, jewelry, pottery, weapons

Exports: Olives, pearls, roe, seafood, spices, wine, wood

Alignment: LE, NE

The Lapal League is a confederation of city-states along the southeastern shore of the Shining Sea. Loosely ruled by the Overking of Sheirtalar, these small realms are sometimes known as the Cities of the Seabreeze, though that phrase technically also includes Narubel, Tashluta, Ormpur, and the ruins of Procalith. Lapaliiya stretches from the eastern end of the Delphin Mountains to the Sheir Peninsula, and from the shores of the Shining Sea to the northern edge of the Mhair Jungles, the Great Wall of Halruaa, the western edge of the Bandit Wastes, and the peaks of the Dun Hills.

Life and Society

The inhabitants of Lapaliiya are zealous warriors and industrious merchants who place tremendous value on personal honor and propriety. Duels and feuds over slights that folk of other lands might readily dismiss are common. Almost all positions of power are dominated by Tashalans, despite their minority status in the country as a whole.

Ophiophobia is common here. Serpentfolk are slain on sight if they reveal themselves as such, and overt dealings with them are punishable by death. Nevertheless, the serpentfolk wield considerable influence in Lapaliiya, and officials routinely overlook suspicious dealings involving persons with significant political strength.

Each city-state in the Lapal League has a civic deity, and its citizens discourage all other faiths. Conflict (whether overt political disagreements or covert skullduggery) occurs more frequently within the confederation than with its neighbors. Clerics and monks enjoy positions of respect and authority in Lapaliiya, while arcane spellcasters are viewed with some suspicion—an attitude that dates back to the Rage of Wizards (1142 DR). The dark god of Lapaliiyan myth is Amphisbaena the World Serpent, who has wrapped the world in his coils and is slowly crushing it into pulp as he devours himself.

In centuries past, Lapaliiya was a nation only in name, ruled by an essentially powerless Grand Council made up of the satraps of the five most powerful city-states. The union of the ruling houses of Sheirtalar and Lushpool in the Year of Glad Tidings

(1147 DR), occurring as it did in the immediate aftermath of the Rage of Wizards, led to the installation of a ruler—the Overking of Lapaliiya. In addition to ruling the cities of Sheirtalar and (through the heir to the throne) Lushpool, the overking theoretically governs all of Lapaliiya with the consent of the Grand Council, which can vote yea or nay but not initiate its own decrees. In practice, however, the overking must still secure unanimous consent from the representatives of Sammaresh, Ithmong, Lushpool, Sheirtalar, and Uzurr, which usually means negotiating with the reigning Shoonsar of Ithmong and the satraps of Lushpool.

Major Geographical Features

The area around Lapaliiya features a variety of terrain types and points of interest.

Bandit Wastes: In the shadow of Halruaa's North Wall, the fertile vineyards of Lapaliiya give way to the desolate barrens known as the Bandit Wastes. This region has traditionally provided a home for outlaws fleeing the reach of Halruaan or Lapaliiyan justice. At present, the worst such group is the Blood Screamers, a band of savage gnome dire weremoles led by a gnome vampire called the Blood-Curdling Scream (CE male rock gnome vampire illusionist 9). This group maintains a lair in a warren of tunnels dug by giant ants in the barrens east of Lapalgard, and its members raid as far afield as the Rathgaunt Hills and the Nath.

Dolphingulf, The: Known as the Delphingulph in the local vernacular, this long, shallow bay is frequented by pods of dolphins drawn here by the bountiful schools of fish. A tribe of aquatic elves dwells in the underwater hills that mark the northern edge of the bay, and its members frequently sell rare treasures from the sea floor in the markets of Sammaresh. According to legend, an ocean striderx^{MM2} protects the Dolphingulf, although no reliable reports attest to the creature's existence.

Dun Hills, The: This low stretch of hills shelters the Misty Vale from the coastal lands along the Shining Sea. The western slopes support scattered groves of olive trees, but little else in the way of vegetation. Small herds of goats—some wild, some not—wander this area. The central hills house many tombs, and undead continue to plague the region despite the efforts of Kelemvor's priesthood. The mist-shrouded eastern slopes of the Dun Hills are covered with trees that are nearly as impenetrable as the Misty Forest.

River Talar: Much of the Shaar drains into this wide, slow-moving river. For the last 10 miles of its length, the waters roar through a narrow, high-cliffed gorge, making the ever-churning river mouth nearly unnavigable. This gorge is home to a tribe of merrow (aquatic ogres) and scrags (aquatic trolls) whose members hunt in the depths of Sheirtalar Bay. Repeated efforts by Lapaliiya's army to dislodge them have ended in failure.

The only bridge over the River Talar for hundreds of miles is the Mouth of Istishia, a natural arch wide enough for three carts to pass each other safely. Well-armed troops garrison small towers on both sides of the bridge to ensure that no one interferes with traffic across this crucial artery.

Sheir Peninsula: Surrounded by cliffs more than 20 feet high, this granite outcropping juts out into the Shining Sea. It is home to scattered thorps of shepherds, who are generally impoverished by the high rents they must pay the Overking to use the land. Inhabitants of this region avoid going anywhere near the Shining Sea, for fear of the harpies that inhabit the cliff faces and prey on passing ships.

Important Sites

Lapaliiya is a busy area with many important trading centers.

Abreon (Large Town, 4,680): The low, rolling hills around this inland town are dotted with vineyards and groves of olive trees.

The civic deity of Abreon is Lliira, and a council of wealthy farmers rules the town. More than fifteen centuries ago, Abreon was the site of a great battle between the armies of Serpentes and the beleaguered defenders of Lapaliiya. Ancient barrows dating back to that battle are scattered across the fields, and from time to time a few serpentine and humanoid undead emerge from them to terrorize the local population.

Dungar (Small Town, 931): Dungar lies along the trade route between Halruaa's Talath Pass and Lapaliiya's coastal cities. Numerous vineyards and olive groves encircle the settlement, which is populated largely by farmers.

The local civic deity is Chauntea, and the town is ruled by a family that traces its roots back to Felingar, a legendary Lapaliiyan bandit lord. Felingar's crypt lies beneath the rolling hills of Dungar and is reputed to contain the dowry of a long-dead Ormpurian chansreena (princess) who was stolen *en route* to her wedding to a prominent Halruaan archmage.

Ilyaport (Small Town, 1,923): Founded about 100 DR, this ancient town grew up around the Umberlant temple known as the Shell House. After the temple's destruction during the Rage of Wizards, Ilyaport began to decline. Today, this once-grand town is little more than a simple fishing village overshadowed by the city of Ithmong to the north.

The Bitch Queen is still the civic deity of Ilyaport, and the town is ruled by the highest-ranking Umberlant in permanent residence—currently Dread Wavelord Dumai Arachneie (CE male Tashalan human cleric 7 of Umberlee/waveservant 1 [see *Faiths and Pantheons*]). Adventurers are the most frequent visitors here because the ruins of Umberlee's temple are said to hold many treasures as yet undiscovered.

Ithmong (Metropolis, 46,729): The Stormwracked City of Ithmong bears the brunt of most storms that rage across the Shining Sea. Even so, the city is second only to Sheirtalar in wealth, population, and political power, thanks to the large volume of goods that flows through its port from Halruaa and the Lapaliiyan hinterlands. The Stormwracked City lies at the head of Ithmong Bay, atop a 50-foot-high cliff. The docks are built inside a dozen linked seacaves that collectively serve as the city's subterranean port district.

The civic deity of Ithmong is Bhaelros (Talos), and the ruler is the hereditary shoonsar, a title currently held by Darhost "the Mongrel" Tharsuir (NE male Tashalan human fighter 14).

Lapalgard (Large Town, 3,701): The Fortress of Lapalgard was built in the decade after the founding of Lapaliiya, to mark the unity of the Lapal tribes in opposing the serpentfolk of the jungles. Today, this ancient stronghold stands just as strong as it did a millennium ago, although it has not seen war since the fall of the Shoon Imperium. Lapaliiyan troops based in Lapalgard spend as much time patrolling the Bandit Wastes as they do the northeastern Mhair Jungles. Caravans passing to and from Halruaa via the Talath Pass account for the prosperity of the town that now surrounds the fortress.

The civic deity of Lapalgard is Tempus, and the Knight-Commander of the Fortress rules the town.

Lhazantal (Small Town, 925): The City of Smiths is actually a small town that lies along the Lapal Way near one of the few iron mines in resource-poor Lapaliiya. Most of its businesses involve metalworking, and its craftspeople produce serviceable suits of mail, stout weapons, various farm implements, and ironmongery. Most Lapaliiyan gnomes who do not dwell in Zashuma live here. The civic deity is Gond, and the town's leader is an exiled master smith from Lantan named Lambrac Dinelstrand (CG male Lantanna human expert 9).

Lushpool (Large City, 17,265): The City of Shimmering Pools lies in the sheltered lee of the Ithmong Peninsula, by the mouth of Talar Bay. Lushpool is built on a seven-terraced hillside, with the lowest terrace serving as the city's wharf district and the topmost one as the exclusive preserve of the Prince Royal.

Lushpool's civic deity is Eldath, and the city is renowned for its moss-draped pools and beautiful hanging gardens. These pools are used to raise several rare kinds of freshwater fish whose roe is a gourmet delight throughout Faerûn. It is this product more than any other that has brought Lushpool its prosperity.

The Prince Royal of Lapaliiya is the titular ruler of Lushpool, although a council of satraps handles the day-to-day governance of the city. Since nine of the sixteen satraps are yuan-ti purebloods from the Hazim'tar clan of the Eselemas tribe, Lushpool is effectively in the hands of the yuan-ti, as it has been for more than two centuries.

It was the Hazim'tar who brought in the breeding stock for Lushpool's rare, pool-bred fish, which are native to the depths of Lake Lemas and thus largely unknown to humans. A two-way *portal* below the Palace of the Prince leads to the ruins of Ss'dath'in'ssatath, on the western shore of Lake Lemas. All passage through the *portal* requires a key—in this case a snakeskin, which may be shed, on a live snake, or part of the body of a serpentfolk. Lapaliiya's rulers and closest advisors are aware of the source of Lushpool's prosperity and the true nature of the Hazim'tar, but they have turned a blind eye to both facts for generations.

Malaxer (Large Town, 4,103): Woodcutters and hunters who dare the northern edges of the Mhair Jungles live here, along with a handful of wild dwarves who have fled their homelands for one reason or another. Most expeditions into yuan-ti territories begin in Malaxer because the town boasts the greatest concentration of skilled guides-for-hire in Lapaliiya. Of course, a not-insignificant fraction of those guides are yuan-ti agents on the watch for adventurers who might pose a threat to the serpentfolk or possess any items that the yuan-ti might desire.

The civic deity of Malaxer is Silvanus. High Lapalyth (baron) Tormar o' the Axe (LN male Tashlutan human ranger 7) rules the town.

Mierskar (Small Town, 1,617): This small farming town lies in the shadow of Lushpool. Mierskar is known for its library, which rivals any on the Tashtan Coast. During the reign of the Shoon Imperium, a far-sighted imperial satrap ordered all extant lore regarding the yuan-ti to be assembled in a single place of learning. Mierskar was selected to house the collection because a prominent school of wizardry dominated the town at the time. Although the school was destroyed during the Rage of Wizards in 1142 DR, the Great Library of Mierskar remains inviolate. The library is open to all Scaleless Ones, and anyone perusing the stacks for at least an hour receives a +5 circumstance bonus on all Knowledge and bardic knowledge checks related to the yuan-ti and their history on the Chultan Peninsula.

The civic deity is Deneir, and the town is a vassal of Lushpool.

Ormpur (Large City, 24,612): Also known as Ormpar in the local vernacular, the City of Saffron lies at the head of Ormpur Bay on the eastern end of the Shining Sea. Ormpur has long been a powerful and independent city-state, thanks to a long-standing alliance with a clutch of chromatic wyrmlings. This alliance allowed the city to fend off the lizardfolk armies of Serpentes while the rest of Lapaliiya fell to the Scaled Ones. Even during the era of the Shoon Imperium, Ormpur retained its nominal independence via careful diplomatic maneuvering in the court of the qysars and the unspoken threat posed by its wyrmling-mounted cavalry.

In the Year of Thunder (1306 DR), on a day known to Ormpurrans as Bloodsword, Chansreena (Princess) Maerildarraine, foster daughter of High Suikh (king) Askulder, slew her father, who was known as the Hand of Tiamat. After proclaiming herself queen, she ordered her knights to set the royal temple of the Dragon Queen afire. This act precipitated a holy war that eventually cost Maerildarraine her throne and her life and reduced Ormpur from a great city to the lesser community it is today. Although it still retains its nominal independence, Ompur is increasingly falling under the sway of the Overking of Lapaliiya.

Ormpur Bay is the only spot in Faerûn where the crocus flower needed to produce saffron grows in abundance. Unlike Lapaliiya to the south, the majority of the human population here is of Tashlutan origin. The difference in ethnicity stems from the fact that Ormpur has never been conquered by Shaaran nomads—primarily because those folk have always been welcomed in the city's markets.

Ormpur is now ruled by High Suikh Helbareim "the Storm Wind" Alanasker, who overthrew Queen Maerildarraine with the backing of the church of Tiamat. Alanasker is the last of his line, now that his only daughter and heir is missing. The tradition of a civic deity is less strong in Ormpur than in the cities to the south, but Tiamat is accorded that title in the City of Saffron thanks to her church's backing of Helbaerim.

Sammaresh (Large City, 21,912): The City of Dancing Dolphins lies at the eastern end of the Dolphingulf, nestled among three low hills that spill out into a wide, sandy beach. This community marks the western frontier of Lapaliiya, although the border technically extends to the foothills of the Hazur Mountains. Sammaresh's docks extend out nearly a half-mile into the shallow bay, since only there is the draft deep enough to accommodate ships. Sammaresh's economy is based on fishing and the harvesting of emerald oysters, which produce brilliant green pearls (base value 500 gp) unlike those found anywhere else.

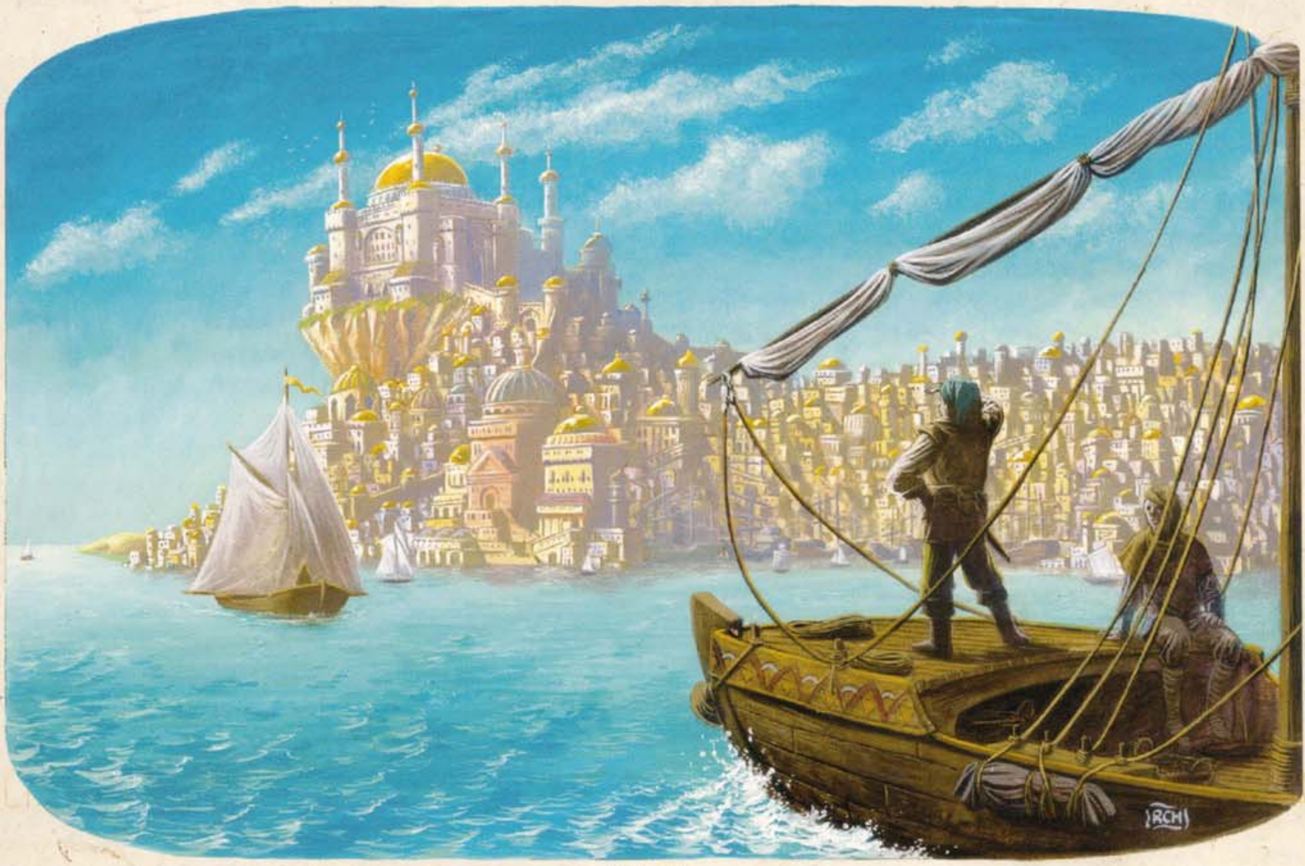
The civic deity of Sammaresh is Selûne, and its populace makes regular pilgrimages to the Abbey of Tharynd, which lies just across the border in lands claimed by the Tashalar.

Sammaresh is ruled from the Mantimera Throne by Lady Ilnara Mremman (CG female Tashlutan human sorcerer 11/archmage 1). Traditionally, a creature known as the Whispering Serpent acts as advisor to the ruler. Said to be the ghost of a fallen couatl, the Whispering Serpent is actually a LG male couatl sorcerer 16 employing *ethereal jaunt*. This creature seeks to marshal the defenses of western Lapaliiya against the omnipresent threat of the yuan-ti. From time to time, the Whispering Serpent manifests before a band of adventurers and asks them to perform a dangerous task designed to counter the plots of the yuan-ti.

Sheirlantar (Small City, 7,306): The Tomb City of Sheirlantar lies on the western slopes of the Dun Hills, along the road that runs from Sheirtalar to Kormul. Wealthy, upper-class Lapaliiyans have always buried their favored dead in the hills above Sheirlantar, and this region of the Dun Hills is now littered with crypts dating back many centuries.

The civic deity of Sheirlantar was originally Myrkul, but Kelemvor now fills that role. (The town elders never did acknowledge Cyric.) The Keeper of Crypts, traditionally a high-ranking priest of the god of the dead, rules the city, serving at the pleasure of Lapaliiya's overking. Currently, that office is held by Antara o' Bones (LN female Shaaran human cleric 5 of Kelemvor/Doomguide 4 [see *Faiths and Pantheons*]).

Sheirtalar (Metropolis, 52,135): The Shining City by the Sea sits at the head of Sheir Bay on the northern end of the much larger Talar Bay, which is located at the foot of the Sheir peninsula. The land slopes sharply down to meet the waters, allowing those arriving on ships to see almost all of the city at once. The city's apt nickname arises from the fact that most of the prominent buildings are domed and leafed in silver and gold.



Sheirtalar

Illustration by Ralph Horsley

Sheirtalar is the capitol of Lapaliiya and the largest and most powerful of the confederated city-states. Its ruler is the Overking of Lapaliiya, Shaliim Wyrmslayer (CN male Tashlutan human fighter 5/sorcerer 5/eldritch knight 7). The Domed Palace of the Overking, the most prominent of Sheirtalar's landmarks, sits atop a granite outcropping in the upper third of the city. Because most trade goods exiting the Shaar for western Faerûn pass through this port, it has become one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the South.

The seedy Liongirt District, which lies along the eastern edge of Sheirtalar, is named for the long-vanished tower of Onsilur Maerdrathom, who styled himself "The Ruling Magister" from 321 DR to 326 DR. Onsilur forced the imperial satraps of the Tashtan Coast to give all arcane spellcasters legal protection and quell the worst of their skirmishing. His influence was significant but short-lived. Shortly after Onsilur's victory with the satraps, Qysar Shoon VII demanded that his vassals hire a large number of mages to slay the Ruling Magister, thus ensuring that the Cities of the Seabreeze would return to squabbling and not pose a unified threat to his throne. Even today, however, the district has a reputation for hidden *portals* and unexpected spell-triggerings.

The civic deity of Sheirtalar is Waukeen, and her Gilt House of Gleaming Coins is second only to the Palace of the Overking in over-the-top opulence.

Untisczer: Once one of the Cities of the Seabreeze, Untisczer now lies in ruins. Its remains are located on a now-drowned point of land east of Tashluta that once extended north of the Lapaliiyan city of Malaxer. A terrifying display of military and magical might by troops of the Shoon Imperium destroyed the city during the Tashalar Campaigns in the Year of Wasteful Pride (285 DR). Most of Untisczer's tumbled and plundered stones have since been carried away, but some still lie about a mile offshore, choked in shallow mud. The haunt of scrags, sharks, morkoths^{MM2}, giant octopi, and other monsters, this site is rumored to hold a great deal of "drowned treasure."

Uzurr (Small City, 10,305): The City of Toiling Monks sprawls across three hilltops on the west side of the Lapal Way. Ilmatari missionaries from Calimshan founded the Cloister of St. Uzurr on this spot during the Shoon Imperium. In the centuries since, the city of Uzurr has grown up around the walled monastery.

The Order of St. Uzurr strives to further the Crying God's teachings along the Tashtan Coast while supporting itself through the production of olives, wine, and various spices. The Abbot of St. Uzurr, Kadar al Ilmater (LG male Calishite human monk 14) is the titular ruler of Uzurr, and Ilmater is its civic deity.

Zashuma (Small Town, 1,399): Zashuma lies along the Lapal Way, overshadowed by the city of Ithmong to the north. Like many inland towns in Lapaliiya, Zashuma is a farming community specializing in the production of wines and olives. The fact that the majority of its citizens are rock gnomes sets it apart from the many similar communities in this area. The ruler of the town is Clanlaird Burinn Rivenstone (NG male rock gnome warrior 5), and the civic deity is Garl Glittergold.

Regional History

The great couatl-led migration of humans to the Jungles of Chult in –2809 DR prompted the long-enslaved human tribes of the eastern jungles, known as the Lapal, to rebel against their serpentine masters. In –1732 DR, after centuries of intermittent clashes with the ruling yuan-ti, the Lapal fled north and east from their villages along the shores of the great inland lake that now bears their name. They settled on the southeastern shores of the Shining Sea and in the lands that would one day become Halruaa.

In the Year of Fragile Beginnings (–690 DR), threatened by renewed attacks from the yuan-ti, the Lapal tribes along the Shining Sea came together and established the nation of Lapaliiya, naming the city of Sheirtalar as its capitol and designating the Fortress of Lapalgard as the symbol of the citizens' common cause. Dwarfed by the empires of Calimshan and Jhaamdath to the north and the omnipresent threat of the yuan-ti to the southwest, Lapaliiya remained a barbaric backwater on the southern shores of the Shining Sea, known only for warlike tribesmen who harried the Calimshan's easternmost colonies during the first half of that realm's Third Age (-900 to –200 DR).

In the Year of Silken Sabers (–569 DR), Calishite trading ships laden with unknown luxuries docked at Sheirtalar's docks for the first time. This event ushered in an era of trade and prosperity along the shores of the Shining Sea. The influence of the Calishites had a civilizing effect on the northern Lapal tribes, transforming their tribal encampments into cities. In the Year of Plentiful Wine (–553 DR), Tashluta was founded by Calishite merchants and Lapal fieldhands.

Lapaliiya's golden age came to a close in the Year of Clutching Dusk (–375 DR), when the same rat-laden Calishite ships that had brought prosperity two centuries before introduced the Empire Plague. Almost 30% of Lapaliiya's population died within a matter of months, and the realm all but collapsed. As a result, when Merrshaulk's avatar Sseth founded the yuan-ti empire of Serpentes in the Year of Erupting Crypts (–304 DR), human resistance was weak and disorganized. By the Year of Sunned Serpents (–189 DR), the lizardfolk armies of Serpentes had conquered all of Lapaliiya except the city of Ormpur and brought in large numbers of Shaaran nomads as slaves.

Lapaliiya remained part of the Serpentes Empire until 34 DR, when it became part of Tashtan (34 DR to 285 DR). It thereafter became part of Shoon Imperium (285 DR to 450 DR), although its cities were effectively independent during the reign of Qysara Shaani (367 DR to 427 DR). (See the histories of Serpentes and the Tashalar for details on these eras.)

In the Year of Willing Sacrifice (435 DR), the towns along Lake Lhespen and the River Shaar rose up in rebellion against the puppet rulers installed by the Shoon and the imperial garrisons that backed them. These colonies were the first in the empire to defy the rule of distant Shoonach, and for a short time (436 DR to 437 DR), no Shoon troops ruled over the central Shaar or the costal city of Sheirtalar. In response, Qysar

Amahl Shoon VII dispatched seventeen troop ships to quell the uprising. During the Seven Burnings campaign, imperial troops rampaged through Sheirtalar, Sheirlantar, Kormul, Lhesper, Sebben, Rethmar, and Channathgate. However, the last qysar's death at the hands of Tethyrian rebels in the Year of the Corrie Fist (450 DR) marked the fall of the Shoon Imperium, and the imperial garrisons were finally driven from the Shaar and the Chultan Peninsula by the end of the Year of Unleashed Fears (451 DR).

The satraps of Lapaliiya's city-states remained in power after the departure of the Shoon legions, having wisely allied themselves with their local populations several decades before the Shoon Imperium's fall. In the two centuries that followed, the merchants of Lapaliiya traded with other ports along the Shining Sea, growing wealthy and content during their nation's silver age while Calimshan and the cities of the Arnaden struggled to rebuild.

In the Year of the Fanged Beast (640 DR), Yeenoghu's cult rose to rapid prominence among the gnoll tribes of the Shaar, largely displacing the worship of Gorellik. This increase in power among the savage humanoids precipitated a sharp increase in attacks against towns in the Lake Lhespen region during the decades that followed. The rise of the gnolls indirectly unified the cities of Lapaliiya, and the Lapal League was initiated in the Year of Peaceful Seas (656 DR). Once again, Sheirtalar was named its capitol. Thanks to the outbreak of intertribal strife amongst the gnolls, the confederation continued even after the threat posed by the gnoll raiders faded in the Year of the Shrouded Slayer (671 DR).

In the centuries that followed, Lapaliiya was periodically attacked by tribes of barbaric Shaaran nomads. Every few decades, a new Shaaran tribe rose to prominence and marched on Lapaliiya. More often than not, the barbarian hordes would conquer the coastal cities, only to be absorbed as citizens while the merchants of Lapaliiya continued their lucrative trade. Over time, Shaarans became the predominant human ethnic group of Lapaliiya, and the Tashalans (the admixture of Lapaliiyans, Calishites, Chultans, and Shaarans who had inhabited Tashtan) became a minority in their own land. Nonetheless, rulership of Lapaliiya's cities remained in the hands of satraps who could trace their lineage back to the era of Shoon viceroys.

In the Year of the Sword's Oath (1142 DR), after centuries of somnolence, the pureblood yuan-ti arcane spellcasters of the Coiled Cabal attempted to take Sammaresh as the first stage of a plan to reconquer the Cities of the Seabreeze. The plot foundered when their actions indirectly unleashed the heretofore-inhibited ambitions of more than two dozen Tashlutan and Lapaliiyan archmages. In a season-long orgy of spell battles along the Tashtan Coast, the so-called Rage of Wizards inflicted wanton destruction on the cities of Lapaliiya and the Tashalar, but failed to gain any wizard (including the yuan-ti) a single throne. It did however, elevate the respect with which Lapaliiyans treated the clergy, leading to the rise of civic faiths. This event also paved the way for the rulers of Sheirtalar and Lushpool to claim the newly created title of Overking of Lapaliiya five years later. Together, these two developments led to Lapaliiyan political divisions that mirrored the enmities and alliances among the cities divine patrons and an ill-fated invasion of Halruaa in the Year of the Broke Blade (1260 DR).

Shaliim, the Prince Royal of Lapaliiya, returned to Lushpool in the Year of the Prince (1357 DR), after four years of adventuring with a band of Waterdhavian wildblades. On one of the worlds that the group had visited via a network of portals, Shaliim and his companions encountered the Black Wyrms, a band of aged black dragons who ruled a kingdom of humans and dwarves. These dragons captured the newcomers handily, but the band fought its way to freedom in a battle that culminated with Shaliim leaping into the mouth of one wyrm and slaying it from within.

In the decade since his return, Shaliim has battled numerous thieves who coveted the treasures he brought back with him. When his aged father finally died of heartstop in the Year of the Unstrung Harp (1371 DR), Shaliim succeeded him. The newly ascended overking continues to search for a wife, but he has yet to find a woman who is his equal in swordplay and sorcery.

Plots and Rumors

The rich lore of Lapaliiya provides a wide variety of opportunities for adventure.

Black Wyrms' Revenge: Although Shaliim returned safely from the world of the Black Wyrms, the great dragons did not so readily forget the thieves who had plundered their hoard. After a decade of searching, the dragons finally located the wildblades' homeworld and have been quietly slaying the members of the group that invaded their world. One by one, Shaliim's old adventuring companions have vanished. Word of the disappearances has finally reached Lapaliiya's latest overking, along with reports of a black wyrm swimming in the depths of Talar Bay. Shaliim is now holed up in his palace, desperately seeking a solution. His inability to represent the kingdom openly is hurting Lapaliiya's mercantile interests and generating numerous whispered discussions at court. In desperation, Shaliim has decided to hire a band of adventurers to penetrate the Mhair Jungles and see whether any lore remains from the ages past, when the yuan-ti battled the great dragons of Faerûn.

Missing Princess: Once a strict, almost tyrannical father, the High Suikh (king) of Ormpur is now a broken man. He has already expended much of his city's treasury in a series of failed attempts to recover his missing daughter, Chansreena (Princess) Alabhansree Alanasker. The chansreena disappeared in the Year of the Prince (1357 DR), along with a large quantity of saffron and many magical blades that were to serve as her dowry. At first, Helbareim suspected half a dozen or so infamous thieves, then he hired a succession of adventuring bands to rescue her from the slave pits of Llurth Dreier, a drow city beneath the Shaar, based on reports that later proved untrue. No hint has ever reached Ormpur's ruler that Alabhansree actually escaped with her lover, the pirate Cairak Redbeard, or that the pair now dwells in a small tower in the Moonshaes. Their haven sits in a snug harbor at Eiresse, a tiny pirate cove near the southwestern tip of Corwell, facing the eastern capes of the isle of Flamsterd.

Agents of the Se'Sehen tribe have observed the High Suikh's obsession and consequent decline, and the tribal elders feel that the time is right to extend their influence into his court. In the past year alone, two highly ranked courtiers have been secretly abducted and transformed into tainted ones, and both now have Helbareim's ear and confidence. But the yuan-ti will have to fight the beholders of the Alimir Hive (outcasts from the subterranean city of Zokir beneath the Almraiven Peninsula of Calimshan) as well as the elders of House Eselemas for influence over Ormpur. At least one Ormpurian noble family is actually a group of beholder magesemploying magic to appear in human form.

Serpentine Suffering: A few years ago, the Abbot of St. Uzurr learned about the horrific yuan-ti practice of creating tainted ones and broodguards. Ever since then, he has been consumed with discovering a means to reverse the process, since he views restoring full humanity as the only way to relieve the victims' suffering. Although he has not yet succeeded, an Eselemaa mole within the order has reported that he is drawing close to his goal. Thus, yuan-ti purebloods working on behalf of all the tribes have begun infiltrating Uzurr to assassinate the abbot.

Najara

Capitol: Ss'khanaja (formerly Ss'thar'tiss'ssun)

Population: 273,820 (ophidians 52%, lizardfolk 28%, muckdwellers 10%, yuan-ti 7%, nagas [bone, dark, and spirit] 3%)

Government: Monarchy

Religions: Semuanya (lizardfolk, muckdwellers), Sess'innek (lizardfolk nobles and lizard king), Shekinester (spirit nagas), Sseth (now Set) (ophidians, yuan-ti), Ssharstrune "the Ghost Naga" (dark nagas), Varae (aspect of Sseth [now Set]) (ophidians), various dragons (ophidians, lizardfolk)

Imports: Herd animals, human slaves, lizardfolk eggs

Exports: Artwork, deinonychus eggs, weapons

Alignment: LE, NE, CE

Najara, the Kingdom of Snakes, is an ancient realm of serpentfolk that encompasses the eastern reaches of the High Moor, the Serpent Hills, the Forest of Wyrms, the Marsh of Chelimber, and the river valleys that meander through the area. Centuries ago, Najara was centered in the western reaches of the Forest of Wyrms, around the now-ruined capitol city of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun. Now, however, the epicenter of this realm has shifted decidedly north into the Serpent Hills (once the exclusive territory of the lizardfolk kingdom of Kalran), and the serpentfolk are strongly influential in the surrounding lands.

Najara is arguably the largest and most powerful kingdom of the Western Heartlands, yet its existence as a realm is almost unknown, even to its nearest neighbors. The serpentfolk do not post guards along the kingdom's borders, or attack every humanoid that passes through their holdings, or extract tariffs from passing caravans. No gnome-dug mines dot the landscape, and no great cities attract visitors from miles around. The region is known to be dangerous, but its neighbors do not believe that its monstrous inhabitants are organized in any real sense. Those who stumble across the truth are rarely seen again, and those who return to human-ruled cities knowing the truth often vanish before their tales can gain any credence.

Life and Society

The king of Najara is the dark naga Ebarnaje, a direct descendant of the ha-naga Terpenzi (see page 31), who founded the kingdom and served as its first ruler. Ebarnaje is served by a noble caste composed of dark nagas (known as collectively as the nagara), spirit nagas (relatively recent immigrants), and yuan-ti. The majority of the population consists of lizardfolk, muckdwellers, and ophidians.

LIZARDFOLK

The lizardfolk native to this area believe themselves to be citizens of the independent kingdom of Kalran. In truth, however, the rulers of Kalran have been vassals of the kings of Najara for many generations. King Amiskal (CE male lizard king fighter 15), the present ruler of Kalran, retains that same relationship with Ebarnaje.

The typical lizardfolk of the northern Serpent Hills are primarily brown, with striking green markings along the arms and upper chest and limbs that are more humanlike than those of other tribes. These alterations reflect the breeding experiments of the Najaran yuan-ti.

Kalran has a militaristic culture in which the strongest warriors serve as chieftains (essentially nobles), and artistic pursuits are held in low esteem. The lizardfolk of Kalran trade with their kin in the Marsh of Chelimber but often battle with their serpentine neighbors. Ebarnaje secretly encourages this state of perpetual low-grade warfare to strengthen the combat-readiness of both groups.

NAGAS

The nagas of Najara form the ruling caste of the Kingdom of Snakes. The dark nagas and free-willed bone nagas are all descendants of Terpenzi, and each is accorded the status of a prince of the realm. Upon the death of the king, the most powerful living dark naga can claim the throne by ritual combat.

Traditionally, approximately a dozen spirit nagas serve the King of Najara. By dint of an ancient pact dating back to the Nejizar's accession to the throne, each spirit naga functions as a protector of and servitor to the royal line, answering directly to the reigning monarch. Some serve as guardians, others inspect ongoing activities in population centers, and the rest function as inquisitors.

OPHIDIANS

The ophidians of Najara, known locally as snakemen, have hides mottled with green and deep yellow, although they can adjust their coloration to blend with their surroundings. Ophidians have simple, snakelike bodies with arms and hands similar to those of humans, and they lack the cobra hoods of southern tribes. Najaran ophidians make up the laborer and warrior castes of the Kingdom of Snakes. They spend their time raising herd animals, hunting, digging tunnels, building subterranean cities, and fighting. Although some ophidians command their fellows, all must answer to the naga and yuan-ti nobility. The religious caste of Najara is dominated by yuan-ti, but a few ophidian priestesses are permitted within the ranks of the Ssethssar. In general, Najaran ophidians are much more religious than members of the ruling castes.

YUAN-TI

With the exception of histachii and tainted ones, all Najaran yuan-ti are members of the Hss'tafi tribe. The dispassionately intellectual yuan-ti make up the administrator, merchant, and religious castes of the Kingdom of Snakes. Although they never perform physical labor, they supervise most ophidian activities and act as advisors to the ruling nagas. Yuan-ti tainted ones are equal to ophidians in rank and are included in the warrior and merchant castes. Yuan-ti histachii are considered little more than bestial slaves.

Najaran society is cold and lacking in emotional vibrancy. The logical and precise serpentfolk enjoy puzzles, mind-expanding exercises, and games that simulate the strategy of war. They favor art that features elaborate, repetitive patterns and eschew representative art. Such attitudes lend themselves to the study of the Art, and many Najarans pursue the path of sorcerer or (more rarely) wizard.

MUCKDWELLERS

Muckdwellers are the slaves of the lizardfolk, who are in turn secretly controlled by the serpentfolk. Primitive packs of muckdwellers dwell in muddy pools and streambeds across the northern Serpent Hills, fighting an unending battle with the snakes of the region. From time to time, the lizardfolk of Kalran call on the muckdwellers to supplement the ranks of their armies, but otherwise muckdwellers are largely ignored or eaten.

major geographical features

The major features of Najara are known to humanoids in the area, though few know them as well as the Najarans themselves.

Backlands, The: Named by coast-dwelling humans for its location relative to them, the area known as the Backlands encompasses the sparsely settled region east of the Serpent's Tail Stream, the Forest of Wyrms, and the Trielta Hills, which are north of the River Reaching, west of the desert Anauroch, and south of the Greypeak Mountains. Fertile Netherese farms once covered this region, but now it is home to all manner of fearsome monsters. Yuan-ti and naga hunting parties, guarded by bands of ophidian warriors, often wander the Backlands seeking new types of prey. The serpentfolk have been known to hunt humanoids—particularly cocky bands of adventurers—for sport.

Forest of Wyrms: The Forest of Wyrms is one of the last remnants of the great forest that once stretched from the Sunset Mountains to the Sea of Swords, and from the western and southern edge of the High Moor down to the Cloud Peaks. Despite the incredibly rocky terrain, the great redwoods and thick pines of this forest soar to incredible heights, suggesting that at least parts of this woodland may have been magically grown by the elves of Shantel Othreier. Logging the forest is almost impossible due to its formidable terrain and the creatures that dwell within.

The Forest of Wyrms has been home to all manner of snakes since the arrival of the yuan-ti in Ss'thar'tiss'ssun. Some of the more dangerous varieties include deathcoils, jaculis, and tree pythons. In addition, the Forest of Wyrms is home to at least a half-dozen immature green dragons. Descended from the legendary Agyrtclughwaur, these creatures effectively rule the forest's depths. Dragon slayers often come here to hunt, but no one has yet recovered the fabled hoard of the Forest Wyrm.

Marsh of Chelimber: This vast marsh is home to thousands of lizardfolk, bullywugs, muckdwellers, and sivs. Their numbers were sorely depleted in the Year of Wild Magic (1372 DR), when beholders enslaved many tribes to fight on behalf of the phaerimms, but the populations have since rallied. The marsh-dwelling tribes battle constantly amongst themselves, uniting only to repel incursions of serpentfolk from the Serpent Hills.

King Kront (CE male lizard king barbarian 13) nominally rules the lizardfolk, bullywug, and muckdweller tribes, but in practice his influence rarely extends farther than his immediate attendants. The siv-dominated Order of the Frog is the real power of the marsh, although individual beholders of the shattered Greypeaks Hive are given wide berths, and the catoblepases^{MM2} are feared by all.

The marsh was formed when the Principality of the Snarling Boar (457 DR to 692 DR), named for the legendary adventurer Boareskyr, was inundated by water elementals in the aftermath of a spell battle between two powerful archmages. Today, many of the Boareskyrn ruins that still dot the marsh are inhabited by brotherhoods of monastic sivs. Other ruins are too magical or intimidating for the marsh inhabitants to tamper with.

The waggishly named Dunkapple Castle, which hangs upside down with its spires in the muck at the head of the Winding Water, was once the abode of the Wizard of the Crag but is now home to a huge thirst of stirges. The most famous ruin is the Keep of the Drowned Prince, which once served as the royal seat of Boareskyr. The realm's last ruler, Prince Chelimber the Proud, has become a powerful wight, guarding his riches in the depths of the flooded keep. His courtiers, a ravenous pack of lacedons, attend him there.

River Catherine: This small stream winds through the southern Serpent Hills until it joins with the Serpent's Tail Stream and, eventually, the Winding Water. This waterway is home to many of the same creatures as the Serpent's Tail Stream. The central arch of the Great Petrified Serpent spans the River Catherine at its widest point.

Serpent Hills: These rocky hills roll along a great expanse, broadening to the west until they become the High Moor. The Serpent Hills average 500 feet in height, with the tallest just below 1,000 feet. This region gets more rainfall than the moor, and its scrubby growth and groves of hardy trees provide cover for the region's innumerable snakes. Many streams, the largest of which is the River Catherine, emerge from freshwater springs and then carve their way through the rocky hills to join with the Serpent's Tail Stream.

Most of the rock faces have been carved or quarried, and the landscape is dotted with ruins, many of which are Anaurian crypts that date back to the era immediately following the fall of Netheril. The hills themselves are primarily granite, though deposits of iron and silver ore, veins of salt, and pockets of fine marble make them a rich resource. Much of the exposed marble has already been quarried, but many deposits remain underground. Only a few shallow caves lie directly beneath the hills, but some of them connect with the more extensive limestone caverns that make up the uppermost reaches of the Underdark.

In addition to lizardfolk, nagas, ophidians, and yuan-ti, the Serpent Hills support a colony of black caimans (crocodiles), a school of bulettes, a handful of beholder variants with vipers in lieu of eyestalks, dinosaurs (deinonychus, known locally as razortails, and small stegosauruses, known locally as spiketails), firedrakes, giant frogs, muckdwellers, urds (treat as kobolds with the winged template; see *Savage Species*), and strange monstrosities bred by the yuan-ti. The harmless forms of wildlife include frogs, at least four varieties of skinks, snake-necked turtles, and toads. All manner of snakes make their homes here as well, including adders (Small vipers), loopsnakes (amphisbaena), striped boalisks, tree pythons, two-headed adders, whipsnakes, winged vipers, and other harmless varieties.

Known dragons include Borcher (male adult bronze dragon), Chellewis (female adult copper dragon), Girac (male old brass dragon), Janic (female old brass dragon), Narbdy (female young adult brass dragon), Nusas (female adult bronze dragon), Naelere and Thyka (female old bronze dragons), Kasidikal (female mature adult black dragon from Orogoth), Landillew (female very old red dragon), Mejas and Miteach (male young copper dragons), Topher and Sivert (male adult brass dragons), and Troberdene (male red wyrm).

Serpent's Tail Stream: Winding along the eastern edge of the Serpent Hills, the Serpent's Tail Stream is fed by countless streams as well as the River Catherine. Like the Winding Water to the south, which it eventually joins, this small river serves as a hunting ground for the black caimans (crocodiles) and many swimming snakes that live along its banks. Ophidian hunters often fish from the western bank of the river, regularly landing scaled salmon and horned trout. Periodic floods cause the Serpent's Tail to rise high above its banks, and from time to time the rising waters reveal the entrance to a long-forgotten Anaurian crypt.

Eastern High Moor: The eastern reaches of the High Moor are desolate and rocky. The small ravines and narrow ridges that mark this portion of the wilderness gradually rise up to form the Serpent Hills. The moors due west of the central Serpent Hills are home to numerous hobgoblin tribes, most of which venerate one of the resident wyrms of the region and war intermittently with the serpentfolk. The moorlands to the west of the northern Serpent Hills are home to savage human tribes of Tethyrian heritage, descended from the long-ago union of House Orogoth's Netherese servitors with scattered clans of primitive humans. The human tribes have long warred with the ophidians of the Serpent Hills, but in recent years pureblood yuan-ti interlopers have transformed many of their human chieftains into tainted ones in order to keep the barbarians in check.

Tor of Swords: This granite upcropping stands just east of the most northeasterly loops that the ever-twisting Winding Water makes. Named for the quintet of Anaurian blades entombed within the hill before the erection of the Standing Stone, this tor is often confused with the nearby Dungeon of Swords and hence rarely visited by adventurers.

The hill once marked the northern border of the Helbryn, the great hunting preserve of the long-ago dwarven kingdom of Oghrann. Caverns hewn from the base of the tor form Endar Aglandtor, the Sword Grotto, which serves as an abbey of Haela Brightaxe. The ablest swordswomen of Haela's Host now wield the magic blades for which the tor is named, often clashing with the serpentfolk who venture down from the hills to plunder the battlefields where dwarf warriors fell in ages past.

Upper Winding Water: The upper reaches of the Winding Water wend from the heart of the Marsh of Chelimber to Boareskyr Bridge. Above the bridge, the river's water is potable, but many intelligent creatures avoid it anyway for fear of consuming "Bhaal water." The Winding Water is slow and turbid, making its way along a wide and marshy bottomland and leaving small swamps and oxbow lakes in its passing. Black caimans (crocodiles) and swimming vipers are the most common predators along the river, but many monsters haunt its banks as well.

important sites

The Serpent Hills feature numerous sites of interest to travelers and adventurers.

Anaurian Crypts: Ancient tombs of the Netherese dating back to the time of Anauria (–339 DR to 111 DR) are scattered throughout the Serpent Hills. Each of these crypts is linked to the rest via a network of *portals*, with the lower levels of the Dungeon of Swords serving as the *portal* nexus. One *portal* in the Dungeon of Swords leads to an empty tomb in the Evermoors, and at least one other exits in the undercroft of a vanished temple of Jergal beneath the shifting sands of what was once Anauria, in the eastern reaches of Anauroch.

More than half of Anauria's tombs remain undiscovered, or at least unbreached. Lurking within are sword-wielding, spell-hurling mummies that practice the ancient traditions of Anaurian battlemages. The serpentine inhabitants of the Serpent Hills have plundered most of the breached crypts, and many now serve as armories or garrisons for small companies of ophidian warriors. The ophidians have linked the lower levels of most plundered tombs to the network of Serpent Tunnels that extends beneath the hills. Although each tomb is thought to contain at least one *portal*, most of them remain undiscovered, even in tombs that have already been plundered.

Boareskyr Bridge (Small Town, 1,112): Great Prince Boareskyr, "the Snarling Boar," was a noted adventurer and the founder of the realm that bears his name. Boareskyr built the first bridge over the Winding Water at this site to attack the rampaging orcs of the Bloody Tusk in the eponymously named year (661 DR).

Over the centuries since Boareskyr's overwhelming victory, the bridge has been rebuilt several times. The most recent version, made of black stone, dates back to the Time of Troubles, when its predecessor was destroyed in a battle between Bhaal and Cyric. Statues to the two gods now guard the way across.

The Bridge, a near-permanent tent city of caravanners, usually lines the road south of the Winding Water. This settlement was abandoned during the Phaerimm War (1372 DR), but it has since reappeared as a local hub for commerce. Yuan-ti purebloods, tainted ones, and even ophidians frequent the tent city's markets, selling Najaran artifacts and making careful note of travelers passing along the Trade Way.

Dungeon of Swords: The Dungeon of Swords lies in the heart of the southern Serpent Hills. The only access is via a natural cavern that opens on the shadowed face of a small hill. From there, a narrow shaft leads down to a series of worked mining tunnels and small rooms carved decades ago by the rock gnomes of Clan Argentum.

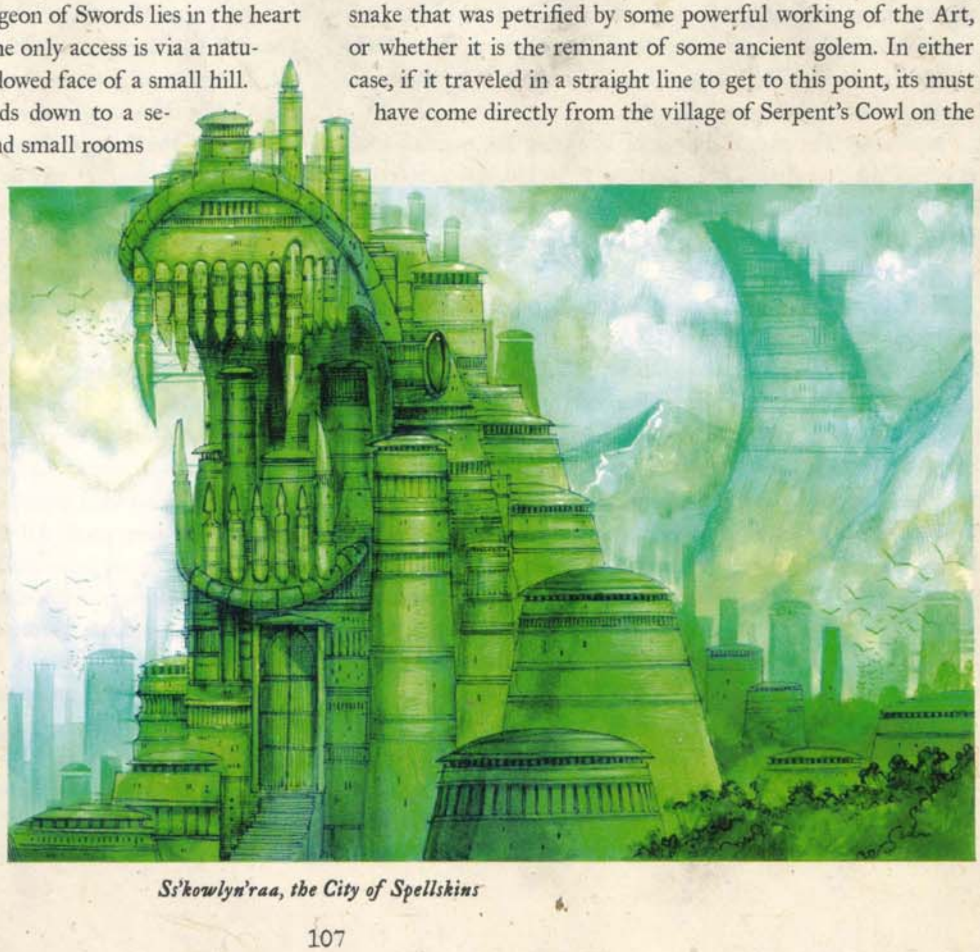
In the Year of the Gate (1341 DR), the gnomes were forced to stop mining for silver when they broke through to a natural chasm in the earth. On the far side of the gorge, the gnomes discovered an ancient Netherese crypt, buried long ago by the same earthquake that had sealed off the chasm. A handful of gnome warriors dared the crypt's forechambers, only to find them guarded by animated flying swords, elaborate magical wards and traps, and ghostly and skeletal warriors.

The gnomes fled in panic, but reports of their discovery inspired a succession of adventuring bands to take up residence in the gnome clan's former living chambers and explore deeper into the crypt. A careful study of the tomb's inscriptions by the second company that entered revealed that it was the Tomb of Thausimbel Thardresk, the greatest king of the distant and now-fallen realm of Anauria, which was renowned for swordmaking and gems.

In the Year of the Unstrung Harp (1371 DR), agents of the Cult of the Dragon drove out the last of the adventuring bands and began to mount their own forays into the Dungeon of Swords. After battling many lizardfolk and other reptilian horrors that had crept down from the surface and taken up residence in the catacombs over the years, the Dragon Cultists discovered that the Tomb of Thausimbel Thardresk was but a false front for many hidden levels and additional crypts below. An initial foray into these lower levels revealed the presence of numerous *portals* but eventually proved disastrous because of the many Underdark creatures that had migrated up from below (including a mature adult deep dragon). After slaying the wyrm, the Dragon Cultists were forced to retreat from its mate through a randomly chosen *portal* that deposited them amongst some ancient, sunken ruins in the depths of the Evermoors.

Great Petrified Serpent (Large Town, 2,730): In the midst of the Serpent Hills, astride the upper reaches of the River Catherine, the petrified body of a gigantic serpent lies mostly buried in the ground. One coil of its immense body forms an arch over the flowing waters, while its head and tail protrude from the rocky ground some 500 feet apart.

No one knows whether this massive statue was once a living snake that was petrified by some powerful working of the Art, or whether it is the remnant of some ancient golem. In either case, if it traveled in a straight line to get to this point, its must have come directly from the village of Serpent's Cowl on the



Ss'kowlyn'raa, the City of Spellskins

Illustration by Wayne England

western edge of the Forest of Wyrms—and hence the ruins of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun.

Ere the death of Terpenzi, first king of Najara, the yuan-ti took over the Great Petrified Serpent and transformed it into a fortress. The tail had already been hollowed out by a Netherese archwizard during the Netherese Age of Discovery (–1205 DR to –696 DR) and turned into a sorcerer's tower (now home to Ssenstyr Sresshin, CE male halfblood yuan-ti sorcerer 16 of the Coiled Cabal). Deep beneath the serpent's tail, ophidian craftsmen have since fashioned a stunning palace built around a pool that has magical healing properties—a favorite retreat for wounded nagara.

The central arch of the serpent, which spans the River Catherine, has been hollowed out to serve as both a covered bridge and a merchant's trading area. Beneath the serpent's head, one tunnel leads away into some ancient, gnome-dug salt mines, which now serve as waystations for visiting yuan-ti and connect to the network of tunnels that crisscrosses the Serpent Hills region. Lower still, another level serves as a subterranean prison.

The mouth of the great petrified serpent is the destination of a one-way *portal* from the outskirts of Surkh, and the observatory atop the tip of the tail holds a skull-shaped *portal* that leads to Skullport (specifically the bowels of Zstulkk Ssarmn's private residence) when used with the correct key (a live snake or snake and skull). The wrong key (a disembodied skull alone) deposits the unwary in the Barrens of Doom and Despair. The two *portals* are now part of a network linking the Black Jungles, the outskirts of Surkh, the Serpent Hills, and the depths of Undermountain. The *portal* to Skullport, however, dates back to the era of the Netherese, when it connected a Netherese demesne with the Sargauth Enclave.

Harkstag: The ruined village of Harkstag lies northeast of neighboring Serpent's Cowl. Because it lacked the protective wards of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun, Harkstag was destroyed in the Year of the Snarling Dragon (1279 DR) by one of the green dragons living in the Forest of Wyrms.

Before its destruction, the village was home to Garshond of Helm and his fledgling temple-keep, the Watch-Tower of the Vigilant. Backed by the merchant families who attended his Council of Helm, Garshond founded the Vigilant Riders to protect the roads linking Waterdeep, Baldur's Gate, and Irieabor in the Year of Flowers (1265 DR). Garshond's efforts incited the brigands and goblin tribes of the region, uniting them against him in a series of battles that became known as Garshond's War (1266 DR to 1268 DR).

Today, the ruins of Harkstag and the Watch-Tower serve as a secure base for the yuan-ti of Najara. From there, the serpentfolk can keep a close eye on events in and around Serpent's Cowl, the Trade Way, and the banks of the Winding Water.

Heartwing Estate: Heartwing Estate is a pegasus-breeding farm owned by Aluena Halacanter (N female human wizard 9/Harper mage 3), one of three adventurers who used to maintain order in the tent city south of Boareskyr Bridge. With the departure of her companions and the rising threat of the yuan-ti in the forest, Aluena is so preoccupied with keeping her holdings and the village of Serpent's Cowl safe that she can spare little time for policing the tent city downstream. She continues to sell trained pegasi to wealthy adventurers for 5,000 gp each.

Illith'arear: In the eastern reaches of the Forest of Wyrms lies the Redwood Ring, an ancient druid circle thought to date back to the height of Shantel Othreier. Unlike most such circles, which consist of stone menhirs, the Redwood Ring is a circle of living redwood trees, each of which has a rune-graven menhir embedded in the depths of its trunk. This abandoned druidic circle is barely identifiable as such because so many other trees have grown up in and around the original ones. Potent weavings of the Art still linger amidst the trees of Illith'arear, but the jaculis that infest the region quickly devour most interlopers.

Ithkyxan's Lair: Ithkyxan, one of the twelve spirit nagas currently serving King Ebarnaje, is also the appointed guardian of a pair of *portals* linking the border of the High Moor and the Serpent Hills with the depths of Halaster's Halls. The *portal* from the Slitherswamp level of Undermountain opens onto an area of rolling grasslands in the shadow of the Serpent Hills. Some 3 miles away, in a bowl-shaped valley between two rocky ledges, lies an ancient Anaurian tomb that Ithkyxan plundered two decades ago. Now guarded by a company of fifty yuan-ti warriors, the old tomb opens onto the subterranean Lake of Bones, which is fed by an underground waterfall from a spring deep in the hill. An ancient shrine to Mask lies in the depths, near a *portal* that has two keyed destinations. One key operates a one-way *portal* that opens in the depths of Skull Pool on Level Three of Undermountain; the other opens a two-way *portal* to the Dungeon of Swords. Only Ithkyxan and its fellow spirit nagas know the secret of the *portal* keys.

Keep of the Lizard King: King Amiskal rules the lizardfolk and muckdwellers of the Serpent Hills from an ancient Anaurian tomb that, once plundered, was converted into living quarters. The former crypt is carved into a hillside in the northern reaches of the Serpent Hills, and Amiskal's throne rests atop the dais where the sepulcher once lay. A secret *portal* somewhere in the crypt connects with the *portal* network centered on the Dungeon of Swords.

Lyran's Hold: Due east of Boareskyr Bridge, on the western edge of the Forest of Wyrms, lie the ruins of a stronghold built by Lyran, a well-known bandit lord. The ravages of time and several battles between green dragons in search of lairs long ago destroyed the keep itself. All that remains is a dark, overgrown stone tower atop an extensive underground complex of storage caverns and passages—now monster-infested.

Harpers and other heroes used to journey to the forest to battle a fallen archlich who lived here, but two adventurers finally slew him and occupied the tower in the Year of the Prince (1357 DR). Durg Earthforge (NE male shield dwarf rogue 10) and Songya of Baldur's Gate (LE female Tethyrian human cleric 11 of Loviatar), now the self-styled lords of the hold, nurse ambitions of controlling the lucrative trade that passes over Boareskyr Bridge. Skeletons and zombies, still following their dead master's instructions, patrol the surrounding forest, and serpentfolk are said to inhabit the catacombs beneath the ruins.

Netherese Villas: The ruins of Netherese villas dot the hilltops along the Serpent Hills. Dating back to the Silver Age of Netheril (–2758 DR to –2207 DR), most of these villas have been claimed by the ruling nagas and yuan-ti of Najara. The new owners typically leave the surface structures in ruins but make extensive changes to the dungeons that lie beneath. Many such subterranean complexes are linked via the Serpent Tunnels to sites elsewhere in the Serpent Hills.

Orogoth: Founded in –2482 DR, the ruined villa of House Orogoth dates back to the Silver Age of Netheril and has long been a beacon for treasure seekers. The Netherese wizards of this family sought to acquire draconic powers as well as the ability to assume dragon form. The elder wizards disappeared to live elsewhere as dragons (or so rumor holds), leaving their gigantic, sprawling abode to their decadent descendants. These latter-day Orogoths magically compelled dragons (possibly their elders in draconic form) to seize treasure from the hoards of fellow wyrms and other sites across Faerûn and bring it back for their amusement.

Almost inevitably, the cruel scions of House Orogoth destroyed one another in –2211 DR in a great battle that involved pitting dragons against their kin. The great villa's towers toppled, and the survivors fled for their lives. Exactly what the Orogoths battled over is unknown, but in the Year of Moor Birds (90 DR), the yuan-ti of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun recovered a host of artifacts dating back to the empires of the sarrukh (including at least one tome of ancient spells) from the ruins.

Today, the ruins of Orogoth are home to "the Old One," a black dracolich great wyrm, and the offspring of its great-grandson, Wastirek (black wyrm). Wastirek's mate is Vilholin (black wyrm), and their children include Awsidorg and Woklef (male adult black dragons), Cheleen (female young adult black dragon), and Kasidikal (see the Serpent Hills). Efforts by adventurers and the Cult of the Dragon to plunder Orogoth's treasures have come to naught—those who dare try are slain, transformed into beast shape, or sent fleeing across the High Moor. The serpentfolk of Najara have linked the depths of Orogoth with the Serpent Tunnels beneath the Serpent Hills, and yuan-ti explorers continue to haunt the ruins despite the dragons' efforts to drive them away.

Serpent's Cowl (Village, 795): This small village sits on the western edge of the Forest of Wyrms just upstream of Boareskyr Bridge, where the waters are safe enough to fish. Named for the ruins of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun on which it stands, Serpent's Cowl consists of a handful of cottages clustered around a small square. The only guesthouse is the Dusty Dragon, whose owner sells food to visitors. The populace consists primarily of woodcutters, hunters, farmers, and fishermen.

Local legend deters the villagers from digging cellars or pits, for fear of opening a route into the ruins below. The villagers continue to live amidst the dangerous ruins because of the protection provided by the Netherese wards that still cloak Ss'thar'tiss'ssun. These wards were designed to prevent the passage of Scaled Ones, dragons, and all other reptilian horrors. But unbeknownst to the Cowlers, the wards have started to fray, and Medium and smaller serpentfolk and scalykind can now enter the lower ruins through subterranean tunnels aligned with apertures in the lower wards. Should a large hole in the encircling ward ever open aboveground, one of the dragons living in the Forest of Wyrms is sure to make a quick snack of the village's inhabitants.

Serpent's Cowl (Village): Conventional, Monstrous; AL CG, CE; Assets 200 gp limit; Population 795; Mixed (79% human, 9% halfling, 7% yuan-ti (tainted ones), 5% gnome).

Authority Figures: Aluena Halacanter, N female human wizard 9/Harper Mage 3 (Harper agent, breeder of pegasi, and town leader); Helskar "the Sly" of Soubar, CE male yuan-ti tainted one commoner 9 (bartender, leader of the tainted one faction, and agent of the yuan-ti); Delwyn Whitedyke, LG male human paladin 2 (leader of the Town Guard).

Important Characters: Atad Yelloweyes, CG male yuan-ti pureblood ranger 8/Harper Scout 1 (agent of the Harpers who never actually enters the village but can be contracted as a guide into the Serpent Hills at the Dusty Dragon); "Dusty" Helmspoke, CG male human commoner 5 (proprietor of the Dusty Dragon).

Town Guard: Fighter 4 (1), fighter 2 (4), fighter 1 (8), paladin 1 (2), warrior 4 (1), warrior 2 (2), warrior 1 (30).

Yuan-ti Tainted Ones: Aristocrat 1 (1), adept 3 (1), adept 2 (2), adept 1 (3), bard 2 (1), commoner 3 (1), commoner 1 (33), expert 4 (1), expert 1 (3), fighter 7 (1), fighter 4 (1), ranger 2 (1), ranger 1 (1), warrior 1 (6). The fighters and warriors in this list are also part of town guard.

Others: Aristocrat 1 (3), bard 4 (1), bard 2 (1), bard 1 (4), cleric 3 (1), cleric 1 (2), commoner 5 (1), commoner 3 (3), commoner 2 (8), commoner 1 (615), druid 4 (1), druid 2 (2), druid 1 (4), expert 7 (1), expert 4 (1), expert 2 (4), expert 1 (18), ranger 1 (1), rogue 5 (1), rogue 3 (2), rogue 1 (4), sorcerer 3 (1), sorcerer 2 (2), sorcerer 1 (4), wizard 1 (1).

Serpent Tunnels: A subterranean network of tunnels links the holdings of the serpentfolk in this area. With Ss'essethen'aa at its nexus, the tunnel network serves as an underground highway system for much of the Serpent Hills. Beyond the heart of Najara, the Serpent Tunnels extend under the southern and eastern fringes of the High Moor to give access to the Lair of Ithkyxan and the ruins of Orogoth. They also lead under the Forest of Wyrms to connect with Ss'thar'tiss'ssun and Ss'zuraass'nee, and out to the caverns beneath Mount Hlim, at the southern tip of the Greypeaks Mountains.

Ss'essethen'aa (Large City, 24,372): The City of Sunning Serpents lies at the heart of the Serpent Hills, atop and within the largest tor of the chain. Ophidian laborers have constructed a host of gardens, chapels, and shrines on the spiraling terrace that winds its way up the hill, making seven full revolutions before reaching the top. At the apex of the tor lies a sprawling temple complex to Sseth, shaped like a massive serpent head. The yuan-ti and ophidian clerics who rule the city live here, and the rest of the inhabitants live within the twisting tunnels and chambers that honeycomb the hill.

Since Ss'essethen'aa is the nexus of the Serpent Tunnels, a great deal of traffic passes beneath its terraced slopes. At the heart of the city lies a two-way *portal* to the Elemental Plane of Earth. Ophidian miners pass through it each day, mining the rich vein of gems adjacent to its terminus and fending off elemental predators.

Ss'khanaja (Small City, 5,278): Located in the western Serpent Hills near the border with the High Moor, the city of Ss'khanaja (also known as the Snake Pit) is the modern capitol of Najara. Beneath a small valley surrounded by hills, the city encircles a narrow shaft that descends deep into the Underdark. A spiraling ramp coiling down the walls offers access to side chambers every quarter revolution. The shaft is warded with a permanent *levitate* spell that allows the city's inhabitants to navigate its many levels with ease. At the bottom of the shaft (more than a mile beneath the surface), water that drips down from above passes through a one-way *portal* to the Elemental Plane of Water.

Ss'khanaja is a restricted city, inhabited only by Najara's ruling dark nagas, their attendants, and their guards. Small family groups of yuan-ti and individual dark nagas live in subterranean chambers that line the central shaft, each attended by a host of ophidian servants. The primary palace of Ebarnaje lies about thirty revolutions below the surface, surrounded by the palatial abodes of the highest-ranking nagara. Six spirit nagas and Terpenzi (see page 31), the bone ha-naga who was Najara's first king, constantly attend Ebarnaje.

Slaves garrisoned elsewhere in the Serpent Hills regard the Snake Pit with well-deserved horror. The decadent serpentfolk who dwell therein are well known for the gruesome experiments they perform in their ongoing attempts to recreate the ancient practices of the sarrukh.

Ss'kowlyn'raa (Small Town, 1,573): The City of Spellskins dates back to the reign of Terpenzi, when Ss'thar'tiss'ssun was the capitol of Najara. Long the preserve of serpentfolk wizards interested in rediscovering and advancing the ancient magics of the sarrukh, Ss'kowlyn'raa was abandoned in the Year of the Vanished Tattoo (92 DR), following Najara's defeat by the Shadowking's forces two years before. In the Year of the Grimoire (1354 DR), yuan-ti wizards of the Coiled Cabal reoccupied the City of Spellskins, making it a base for their explorations of neighboring Ss'thar'tiss'ssun.

Ss'kowlyn'raa lies within the southern reaches of the Forest of Wyrms, in the depths of an overgrown ravine lined with cavemouths. Each cluster of caverns is now home to a different school of magical inquiry, and magic-hewn tunnels link them all together. The subterranean reaches of Ss'kowlyn'raa are linked via the Serpent Tunnels to the depths of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun and the Serpent Hills to the north. Ophidian-driven caravans of pack lizards regularly bring fresh supplies to the City of Spellskins and pick up recovered relics for transport elsewhere.

Ss'thar'tiss'ssun: The ruined City of Fountains dates back more than thirty millennia to the era of the sarrukh empires, although it was one of the lesser realms of that age. Built as a temple-city by the cult of Ssharstrune, it was abandoned after the death of the god and left for eons to the guardianship of the bone ha-naga Terpenzi. Thousands of years later, Ss'thar'tiss'ssun was rebuilt by ophidian followers of Terpenzi as the capitol of Najara, then transformed once again by the yuan-ti they had magically summoned. In the Year of Moor Birds (90 DR), Netherese wizards in the employ of the Shadowking destroyed the city for a second time, and its serpentine inhabitants fled north into the Serpent Hills.

Today, the ruins of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun lie at the western edge of the Forest of Wyrms, beneath and around the village of Serpent's Cowl. Flickering Netherese spell barriers that were erected by agents of the Shadowking to expel the serpentfolk still deter most would-be explorers. The Coiled Cabal, however, finally penetrated the magical wards in the Year of the Serpent (1359 DR).

At the heart of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun lies the Shrine of Cowled Serpents, a temple of Ssharstrune that was rededicated to Sseth after the arrival of the yuan-ti. This buried shrine contains the legendary *Naja Fountain*, which served as the lair of the bone ha-naga Terpenzi while it guarded the legacy of the sarrukh before the arrival of the ophidians.

The ruins of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun are home to all manner of monsters, many of which were summoned as guardians from the southern jungles by the arcane spellcasters of the Coiled Cabal. Ti-khana dinosaurs, bone dark nagas, and sword spiders guard treasures dating back to the sarrukh and the first Kingdom of Snakes, as well as Netherese artifacts plundered from Orogoth and other ruins throughout the Serpent Hills.

Ss'zuraass'nee (Large City, 17,998): The City of Abominations lies in the depths of the northern Serpent Hills, about one-half mile below the lizardfolk kingdom of Kalran. Ss'zuraass'nee is situated along a dry subterranean riverbed that once drained runoff from the southern Greypeaks into the depths. The serpentfolk have carved the city's walls to resemble the digestive tract of a massive snake. This disturbing image is reinforced by the faint acidic tang that clings to the air, making breathing uncomfortable for creatures unused to this environment.

Ss'zuraass'nee serves as the serpentfolk's primary trading link with the Underdark. The yuan-ti who rule this place still honor a centuries-old alliance with the illithids of Llacerellyn, which lies in the Middle Underdark north of the Serpent Hills. As a result of the good relations between these races, numerous yuan-tillithids (half-illithid/half-yuan-ti), with their distinctive, viper-headed, scaly tentacles, roam the City of Abominations. Drow merchants from Eryndlyn (beneath the northern High Moor) and Sshamath (beneath the Far Hills) are frequent visitors to Ss'zuraass'nee, as are derro traders from Tsenviilyq, which lies in the lower Underdark beneath the border between the High Moor and the Serpent Hills. Grimlocks from the Underdark settlement of Reeshov also frequent the City of Abominations.

Regional History

During the Silver Age of Netheril (–2758 DR to –2207 DR), the Netherese began establishing outposts in the wild lands to the west, which are now known as the Western Heartlands and the North. Some of these pioneers sought badly needed resources, while others set up isolated bases from which to perform their magical experiments. A handful of outposts established in the southern reaches of the High Moor and the area now known as the Serpent Hills were linked by a network of *portals* with the heartlands of Netheril.

The Netherese wizards of House Orogoth built a fortified villa in the southern reaches of the High Moor in –2482 DR, near the northern edge of the Serpent Hills. Several generations of Orogoths sought the power of Faerûn's wyrms, and legend has it that some eventually obtained it—at least after a fashion. One early byproduct of House Orogoth's research was the Serpent Curse, a magical malady that transformed humans into a snakelike race that Orogoth's elders named ophidians. Many of House Orogoth's Netherese servants succumbed to this plague and were driven into the hills to the west circa –2300 DR. Unable to rid the place of the curse, the wizards eventually replaced their former servants with constructs and undead servitors.

In the centuries that followed, the ophidians organized into savage tribes. These clans battled each other, the nearby clans of lizardfolk, the barbaric descendants of Orogoth's exiled human servants, and the scattered tribes of gnomes that had settled the hills after their emancipation by the Netherese in –2387 DR. During this era, many of the ophidian tribes began venerating dragons, perhaps in keeping with House Orogoth's obsession with the great wyrms.

In the Year of Bold Pioneers (–461 DR), the phaerimms beneath Netheril began casting the *lifedrain* spells that would eventually transform all of Low Netheril into the Great Desert of Anauroch. While High Netheril's nobles conducted business as usual in their sky cities as if nothing of import were occurring, the rich farmlands that employed and fed the bulk of Netheril's populace quickly fell barren. The residents of Low Netheril began migrating west and south, felling great swaths of the Far Horns Forest within just a few generations. The Netherese settlers put increasing pressure on the eastern territories of the ophidians and lizardfolk, forcing the reptilian races to retreat farther south and west. Eventually, the Scaled Ones had to concede the eastern slopes of what the Netherese called the Serpent Hills.

In the Year of Mageserpents (–361 DR), a band of ophidians stumbled across the ruins of an ancient sarrukh city, hidden beneath what is now the western end of the Forest of Wyrms. During their explorations, the ophidians discovered the *Naja Fountain*, an ancient artifact of the sarrukh inhabited and guarded by a powerful ha-naga named Terpenzi. Claiming to be the prophet of the World Serpent, the creature proclaimed itself King of Najara and began a decades-long campaign to subjugate the scattered tribes of ophidians to its rule.

In the Year of Sundered Webs (–339 DR), the fall of Netheril precipitated a final and nearly wholesale exodus of humans from the lands of Low Netheril. Many Netherese migrated south and west into the area now known as the Backlands. This exodus in turn prompted the remaining "free tribes" of ophidians to migrate to Ss'thar'tiss'ssun, leaving the Serpent Hills to the scattered clans of lizardfolk and gnomes. Unbeknownst to both groups, Netherese from the distant realm of Anauria began constructing tombs beneath the hills, accessing them via the ancient *portal* established during the Silver Age of Netheril.

Under the tutelage of Terpenzi, the ophidians studied the ancient magics of the sarrukh and learned to summon all manner of reptilian monsters. Anticipating the rising power of the Netherese survivor states, the ophidians summoned the Hss'tafi tribe of yuan-ti from the southern jungles of Faerûn in the Year of Netted Dreams (–320 DR). While Terpenzi plotted, the yuan-ti built a great temple at the heart of the city, with the *Naja Fountain* at its core, and firmly established themselves as Najara's ruling caste.

Meanwhile, to the north, the scattered clans of rock gnomes were forced to withdraw to the Trielta Hills by the growing power of the lizardfolk, who had formed the tribal confederation of Kalran in the central and northern Serpent Hills. By the first century Dalereckoning, the Kingdom of the Snakes had emerged as a regional power in its own right alongside such human states as the Talfirian- and Netherese-ruled Duchy of Indoria (located in the area known today as the Fields of the Dead), the Talfirian city of Talis in the depths of the Reaching Woods, and the Netherese-ruled subterranean realm of Philock, which lay just east of the Wood of Sharp Teeth (now known as the Netherese Caverns).

In the Year of Purloined Power (34 DR), a Talfirian bard named Verraketh Talember discovered the ***Shadowstar***, a mysterious artifact that fell like a shooting star into the High Moor. While the artifact slowly transformed him into the Shadowking, Verraketh gathered an army of shadow-spinners and began forcibly assimilating the Netherese and Talfirian realms of the Chionthar river valley into the empire of Ebenfar.

In the Year of the Faithful Oracle (89 DR), the heretofore immortal Terpenzi foresaw its own death at the hands of the Shadowking. In response, it ordered its subjects to seek out the magics of ancient Netheril while it searched for a mate. In the Year of the Moor Birds (90 DR), the serpentfolk plundered the ruins of Orogoth and brought back many Netherese artifacts, while Terpenzi hid its dark naga offspring in a secret hold in the Serpent Hills. Thus prepared, Terpenzi assembled a great army of ophidians commanded by yuan-ti to attack the growing might of Ebenfar.

The serpentfolk might well have prevailed had it not been for a band of Netherese wizards in Verraketh's employ, who teleported into great temple of the serpentfolk and expelled Terpenzi from the *Naja Fountain*. Although the ha-naga and its followers escaped, the armies of Ebenfar destroyed the city of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun, cloaked its ruins in powerful warding spells, and scattered the serpentfolk of Najara. Terpenzi led its remaining armies into battle with the Shadowking but was destroyed. The surviving serpentfolk fled the battlefield (now called the Fields of the Dead) with their king's remains, but the Kingdom of Snakes was no more.

In the centuries that followed, scattered tribes of ophidians battled the lizardfolk of Kalran for control of the Serpent Hills, all the while harried by the Shadowking's armies. But unbeknownst to the humans of Ebenfar, the followers of Terpenzi were plotting the rebirth of their realm. The surviving yuan-ti labored in the depths of their secret hold to raise Terpenzi's brood and school the young dark nagas in the ways of magic. One of the ha-naga's offspring, Jacinica, became the new king-in-exile of Najara in the Year of the Prowling Naga (142 DR). As its first official act, Jacinica ordered the remains of Terpenzi to be transformed into a bone naga and enslaved to the bearer of the artifact known as the *Marlspire of Najara*.

The greatest obstacles to the resurgence of Najara were the empire of Ebenfar and the kingdom of Shavinar, which lay between the Troll Hills and the River Chionthar. Shavinar eventually fell to trolls in the Year of Broken Flame (277 DR), and Ebenfar collapsed after the imprisonment of the Shadowking in the Year of the Miscast Shadow (323 DR), thus clearing the way for a new regime. But before the rulers of Najara could establish much influence, both the Shoon Imperium and the Kingdom of Cormyr decided to extend their influence into the Western Heartlands in the Year of the Fearless King (361 DR). Among the immigrants in the ensuing wave of human migration were some Varae-worshipers from the Shining Plains who came north in search of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun. When these humans unleashed an artifact created by House Orogoth and left behind by the yuan-ti, they were transformed en masse into ophidians.

The collapse of the Shoon Imperium in the Year of the Corrie Fist (450 DR) once again left the way clear for the serpentfolk. But the sudden death of Jacinica in the Year of Rolling Heads (452 DR) precipitated a decades-long power struggle among the nagara that lasted until the Year of the Fortress Scoured (511 DR), when Nejizar finally ascended to the throne of Najara. The new dark naga king established its rule over the serpentfolk in the Year of Trials Arcane (523 DR), thanks in large part to its alliance with a dozen spirit nagas. By then, however, the Tricrowned Kingdom of Phalorm had claimed the High Moor and begun constructing a chain of fortresses along the western border of the Serpent Hills.

Since Najara was too weak militarily to confront the Realm of Three Crowns directly, Nejizar sent yuan-ti infiltrators south to the Reaching Woods in the Year of the Alabaster Mounds (577 DR). Their mission was to incite the hobgoblin tribes of the region to march northward in a great horde. But infiltrators dispatched by Phalorm dealt the hobgoblins a sharp check at the Battle of Notched Axes, then ensured the victory of King Ruardh Lightshiver's armies at the Battle of Blunted Fangs by assassinating the serpentine provocateurs. This defeat forced the serpentfolk of Najara to retreat into the Serpent Hills.

The Principality of the Snarling Boar was destroyed in the Year of the Slain Mountain (993 DR), when a great spell battle erupted at the head of the Winding Water between Taskor the Terrible of Irieabor and the Wizard of the Crag. After both archmages vanished, imprisoned water elementals ran amok, inundating Boareskyr and leaving behind the Marsh of Chelimber in their wake. Many of the lizardfolk tribes that had long inhabited the northern Serpent Hills took advantage of this development to migrate eastward into the newly forming marsh. Those left behind were too weak to oppose the armies of Najara, which had grown strong since the fall of Delimbiyran, the Kingdom of Man, in the Year of the Shrouded Slayer (671 DR). Thus, the lizardfolk kingdom of Kalran soon became a vassal state of the Kingdom of Snakes in all but name.

Over the next three centuries, Najara slowly grew in power under the guidance of various dark naga kings counseled by the nagara and the yuan-ti nobility. Cognizant of the risks posed by humanity and its allies, the serpentfolk of Najara contented themselves with claiming the Serpent Hills and continuing to influence the rest of western Faerûn from the shadows. One by one, the human-ruled successor states to Ebenfar that had once ruled the Western Heartlands were undermined by yuan-ti infiltration. Eventually, the Winding Water river valley was devoid of major human settlements, and the Western Heartlands were free of human-ruled realms larger than city-states.

Since its ascension to the throne in the Year of the Ormserpent (1295 DR), the dark naga Ebarnaje has continued the cautious strategy of its predecessors, but it dreams of reclaiming the city of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun as its seat of power. Although its forces could easily conquer the village of Serpent's Cowl, the dark naga king is well aware of the response such an outright attack would provoke from the Lord's Alliance. Instead, the dark naga king has dispatched a succession of agents to the village with orders to gradually transform its inhabitants into tainted ones. The king has also backed the Coiled Cabal's efforts to explore the ruins below Serpent's Cowl. The dark naga king believes that such a two-pronged campaign will eventually bring the region under its direct control without any outside challenge. In anticipation of the day that Najara must wage war with its neighbors, Ebarnaje has backed the rise of the Cult of the Dark Naga, a far-wandering organization of dark nagas pledged to recover all manner of spells and magic that might advance the power of Najara.

Plots and Rumors

Najara is rich with opportunities for adventure by virtue of its many inhabited areas and the factions that control them.

Cult of the Dark Naga: The Cult of the Dark Naga is a loose-knit organization run by a septet of Najaran dark naga nobles known as the Seven. The group is discreetly backed by Ebarnaje, the king of Najara. Long allied with Manshoon and the Zhentarim, the Cult of the Dark Naga arrived in force in the Dalelands after the Year of Moonfall (1344 DR) to plunder the ruins of Myth Drannor.

Such plans quickly ran afoul of the phaerimms, whose subtle hand had guided the nagara to the City of Beauty in the first place. To gain control of the nagara, the Myth Drannan lich Druth Daern perpetrated a complex deception. Speaking through a wraithlike apparition that he created above a certain Myth Drannan altar, he claimed to be Ssharstrune, the Ghost Naga—a long-dead naga god. With Daern's unseen help, the Ghost Naga revived the nagara who had not survived the thornbacks as bone nagas to serve their living kin. Since then, the Ghost Naga has been guiding the Seven in a hissing whisper and creating a veritable army of undead nagas. Now that the Myth Drannan phaerimms have finally been severely weakened, if not destroyed, the Ghost Naga's followers (and hence Druth Daern) are actively contesting with the resident devilkin for control over the city's ruins.

Subversion of Serpent's Cowl: Aluena Halacanter and some older residents of Serpent's Cowl believe they have a sacred duty to watch the area lest the yuan-ti return. They grow nervous about the increasing number of ophidians approaching the merchants at Boareskyr Bridge, apparently hoping to purchase any Netherese artifacts unearthed from nearby ruins. They also fear the rising numbers of snakes and snakelike creatures within the Forest of Wyrms.

But the brave defenders of Serpent's Cowl remain completely unaware of the true threat to their city, which has little to do with ophidian traders or mutant serpents. The yuan-ti of the Serpent Hills have recently developed a technique for infecting humans with a tiny portion of their corrupted essence to create a new kind of servitor called a tainted one. Such altered humans can pass freely through the wards that encircle the village. In recent years, numerous villagers have been waylaid during furtive forays outside the wards and turned into tainted ones, who now carry out missions within the village for their yuan-ti masters. Others have disappeared from the village altogether and now serve as broodguards in the yuan-ti brood chambers.

okoth

Capitol: Sar'Rukoth

Population: 8,603 (sarrukh 1%, wereserpents 88%, werecrocodiles 11%)

Government: Alliance of Clan Leaders

Religions: Sebek (werecrocodiles), Sseth (now Set) (sarrukh)

Imports: Magic, weapons

Exports: Relics from other planes

Alignment: LE, NE

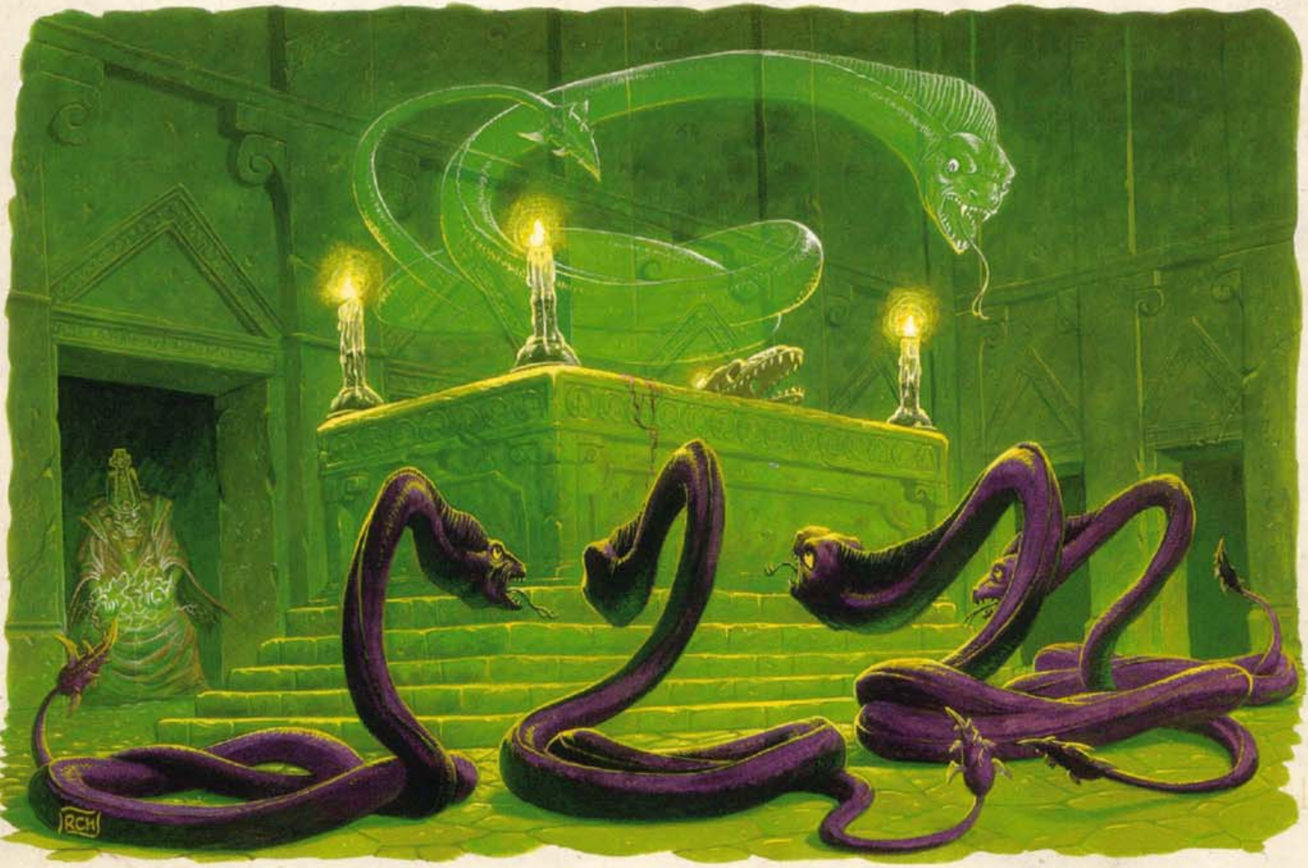


Illustration by Ralph Horsley

Ssharstrune the ghost naga

The ancient sarrukh empire of Okoth collapsed millennia ago, only to be slowly reborn over the last several centuries. Today, the Empire of the Shimmering Sun encompasses the entire Lake of Salt, including the salt flats along Azulduth's edge that are revealed during the hot season. A loophole in the ancient treaty between Mulhorand and Unther left the waters of the Lake of Salt unclaimed. Thus, hints of the sarrukh's renewed presence in the heart of their ancient homeland have been ignored by the slumbering Old Empires, even though Mulhorand now rules much of Unther.

Okoth is ruled by the remnants of the Okothian sarrukh, who have for now put aside the differences that shattered their empire long ago in a civil war. The bulk of the realm's populace consists of wereserpents and werecrocodiles (immigrants from the ruins of Sekras). Okoth's inhabitants spend most of their time lurking in ancient caverns and ruins beneath the salt flats (or the water's edge, depending on the time of year). They venture forth only to battle extraplanar khaasta raiders and to recover ancient Okothian artifacts from the surrounding lands.

Life and society

Though the Lake of Salt is one of Faerûn's harsher environments, this dry, hot region is perfect for the reptilian races of Okoth. The inhabitants live furtive lives, sneaking about the southern reaches of Mulhorand and Unther to avoid drawing the ire of the God-Kings of the Old Empires and their servants. Both the wereserpents and the werecrocodiles spend much of their time in animal form, allaying the suspicions of the Mulan while adding to the dangerous reputation of the region's wildlife. When so directed, however, they assume humanoid form and infiltrate the surrounding communities.

Although the lords of the Great Clans nominally rule Okoth, in truth the fractious Okothians are held together by the iron will of Pil'it'ith, the albino sarrukh lord of Clan Sar'Ruuss (see page 60). Pil'it'ith lairs amidst the ruins of Sar'Rukoth, the ancient seat of his clan and now the capitol of the realm. From there, the albino sarrukh directs the escalating war with the khaastas and entertains emissaries from the Church of Set.

Major geographical features

Only two waterways break the vast desert above and around Okoth.

Azulduth: The Lake of Salt is a shallow, highly salinated body of water drained by the River of Swords in the southeastern reaches of Mulhorand. During the hot season, large portions of Azulduth dry up, forming salt flats for months at a time. Azulduth is home to the sarrukh clans of Okoth, wereserpents members of the Cult of Set, and increasing numbers of werecrocodiles from Sekras.

Green Sword River: The River of Swords has formed the boundary between Unther and Mulhorand since the First Mulhorand-Unther War (–1967 DR to –1961 DR). The Green Sword River, its eastern tributary, serves as a pathway for werecrocodiles migrating upstream to Azulduth from the ruined city of Sekras, which lies at the junction of the Blue Sword and Green Sword Rivers.

Important sites

Though Okoth appears featureless, the old empire of the sarrukh still boasts several points of interest to adventurers.

Azun (Small Town, 1017): On the western shore of Azulduth lies the small town of Azun. Built as a waystop along the caravan trail from the Council Hills to Durpar and the Golden Water, the town hosts a steady stream of Durpari merchants heading north and west to the lands along the Inner Sea. Azun's inhabitants also derive small incomes from fishing in the Lake of Salt and mining the salt flats during the summer months.

One of Azun's most frequent visitors is Baylox (LN male Mulan human wizard 14/archmage 3), Master Mage of Shussel, the reigning authority on Okothian magics and oft-consulted sage. Intrigued by increasing reports of reptilian activity in and around Azulduth, Baylox continues to collect evidence for his secret theory that the ancient inhabitants of Okoth have returned.

Buldamar (Village, 578): On the desolate eastern shore of Azulduth lies the village of Buldamar. This settlement grew up around a series of semipermanent camps established by adventurers exploring the sprawling Okothian ruins known as the Vaults of Record. The fortunes of the villagers have ebbed and flowed for centuries when such delvings came into and out of vogue. When adventurers are few, the villagers eke out a subsistence living by mining salt and fishing for the few fish that still swim in Azulduth's depths.

Today the town is bustling anew, although few suspect that many of the bands of adventurers based here are not what they seem. The Okothian sarrukh have recently begun sending bands of wereserpents and werecrocodiles in human form into the ruins to search for any artifacts that might have escaped centuries of plunderers. Other Okothian agents are poring over the town's records in hopes of learning what items were removed in centuries past and by whom. Pil'it'ith intends to employ human members of the Cult of Set to track down the missing artifacts and return them to their rightful owners. This plan, should it come to fruition, is likely to result in a wave of mysterious thefts and killings in the elite quarters of Mulhorand's northern cities.

Nezram's Tower: On the outskirts of Azun lie the ruins of Nezram's Tower. Torn apart nearly seven centuries ago by the young green dragon Chaathuuladroth, Nezram's Tower was largely looted of its treasures—first by the dragon and then by Nezram's descendants who now live in the town of Nezras on the eastern slopes of Mulhorand's Sword Mountains. Nevertheless, adventurers continue to visit the site, hoping to recover the hidden magics of the legendary Archtransmuter.

Sar'Rukoth: This ancient ruin lies buried in the heart of a low hill in the southern salt flats of Azulduth. The hill becomes an island in the colder months, when the lower catacombs fill with saltwater.

Sar'Rukoth is the ancient steading of Clan Sar'Ruuss, the most powerful of the surviving great clans of ancient Okoth. The stronghold now serves as the capitol of New Okoth and the seat of power for Pil'it'ith, its albino sarrukh ruler.

The surrounding ruins house several dozen Okothian sarrukh, plus several hundred wereserpents, werecrocodiles, and emissaries of the Church of Set who attend them. Most Okothian artifacts recovered by the sarrukh are brought back here for analysis and, should any prove useful, replication.

Vaults of Record: The Vaults of Record are ancient Okothian ruins on the outskirts of Buldamar, a desolate village far from civilization. Discovered in the early days of Mulhorand and Unther, the vaults were plundered of their treasures, which were used to build the magical might of Mulan's twin empires. Today they lie empty, though they still draw a steady stream of adventurers hoping to turn up long-lost treasures.

Regional History

During first era of the Days of Thunder (more than 35,000 years ago), the sarrukh ruled over all Faerûn, centering their power in three major empires. The first and easternmost of these was Okoth, founded circa –35,000 DR along the forested shores of Azulduth, which was then the largest freshwater lake in Faerûn. Like their kin in Isstosseffifil and Mhairshaulk, the Okothians created many races in their own image, including lizardfolk and others long since vanished.

Okoth crumbled after less than a millennium, when a devastating civil war forced its feuding great clans to flee across the planes. The races they had created were left behind to find their own homelands and survive as best they could.

During their plane-walking, the Okothian sarrukh experienced alternating periods of growth and decline. Several millennia ago, in the Barrens of Doom and Despair, they chanced upon a reptilian race known as the khaastas, which they incorrectly assumed to be descended from their own lizardfolk creations. An ill-considered attempt to enslave these creatures resulted in a war between the two races that raged for centuries. When the tide turned in favor of the khaastas, the Okothian sarrukh fled across the planes with their foes at their heels.

In the Year of the Nesting Harpy (643 DR), Nezram the Transmuter, author of the famed spell tome boastfully entitled *Unique Mageries,* left his tower on the western shore of Lake Azulduth to explore the outer planes. Nearly forty years later, most of his Mulan descendants were scattered or slain when a young green dragon named Chaathuuladroth tore apart Nezram's Tower in the Year of the Zombie Lords (681 DR). The victorious dragon flew off to the lonely, mountainous regions to the west with most of Nezram's treasures.

Unbeknownst to anyone else, Nezram had spent a great deal of time studying the ancient legacies of Okoth and knew of the sarrukh. When he discovered an ancient *portal* in the depths of Azulduth, he passed through it in hopes of discovering what had become of these once-mighty creatures. Nezram's fate is not recorded, but an ancient warding spell alerted the scattered sarrukh clans to the use of their long-forgotten *portal* and prompted at least one group to return secretly to Faerûn in the Year of the Rampaging Raaserpents (699 DR) to investigate.

In the centuries that followed, increasing numbers of Okothian sarrukh returned to their ancient homeland in hopes of evading the vengeful armies of the khaastas. Amidst the ruins of their former empire, the Okothians hoped to recover their long-buried weapons and hide long enough to rebuild their strength.

The latter wish came to naught when the first khaasta raiding party passed through the *portal* in the Year of the Gate (1341 DR). Although the sarrukh managed to close the ancient *portal* and destroy the raiders before they could alert their fellows, the disappearance of this group drew additional bands of khaastas to Faerûn in subsequent years.

During the Time of Troubles (1358 DR), the Okothians secretly approached the divine minions of Set with a brazenly treacherous offer: In exchange for assisting Set in binding their god Sseth into eternal slumber, the Mulhorandi Lord of Evil would grant the sarrukh spells and aid them in their ancient battle with the khaastas. Set accepted their proposal and created the first wereserpents to mark the agreement. He also convinced his sometimes-ally Sebek to send a host of werecrocodiles up the River of Swords to serve in the Okothians' army.

Today, the Okothian sarrukh and the khaastas have reached a détente of sorts. The khaastas continue to dispatch raiding bands to Faerûn, but the Okothian sarrukh continue to hold them off, thanks to their newfound patron and an army of lesser allies. Frustrated by their inability to take Okoth, the khaastas have recently begun appearing elsewhere in Faerûn, hoping to learn more about the world of their ancient enemies and discover other sarrukh enclaves and ruins.

Plots and Rumors

Though many of its treasures have been plundered, the ancient realm of Okoth still holds many secrets.

Legacies of Nezram: Nezras, grand-nephew of Nezram the Transmuter, arrived in Myth Drannor in the Year of the Tainted Troll (683 DR) to study at the Six Tyryl Towers. Explorers of the ruined City of Beauty have recently recovered some letters that Nezras wrote to his elven wife, a fellow student named Raejiisa Sicafei, whom he married in the Year of the Unshriven (686 DR). Penned in the Year of Portents Perilous (707 DR) during a visit Nezras made to Mulhorand, the letters discuss reports of powerful serpentfolk haunting his granduncle's ruined tower and give an accounting of his inconclusive spell battle with one of them. These letters are among the few sources of firsthand information about the sarrukh that exist in Faerûn today. Baylox, noted sage of Okothian lore, has learned of their existence and is now seeking a party of adventurers to recover them for him.

Nightmares of the Slumbering Serpent: By betraying their god Sseth, the Okothian sarrukh acquired a more active divine patron and a host of new servitors. But the bound Sseth slumbers restlessly, and his nightmares have roused serpentfolk across Faerûn from centuries of somnolence. Led by the yuan-ti and sarrukh of Serpentes, the serpentfolk have begun plotting anew against the Scaleless Ones who have plundered their ancient treasures and stolen their rightful lands. A few also plot against the Okothians, who some suspect are responsible for Sseth's recent troubled state.

Return of the Khaastas: The khaastas, having finally traced the fleeing Okothian sarrukh back to their ancient homeland, are now seeking to annihilate their ancient foes once and for all. To that end, the khaastas have dispatched scouting parties across Faerûn to seek out the ruins of the ancient sarrukh empires. Scattered skirmishes between the khaasta scouts and various serpentfolk and scalykind creatures have given rise to rumors of a "reptile war."

Wyrm Hatchery: As a result of the strong rains during the past few seasons, water has seeped into lower portions of Azulduth's salt bed, causing several magically preserved eggs of wyverns and dragons to hatch. The wyrmlings proceeded to crawl and fly north, eating whatever they could find. Enterprising wizards in Mulhorand are trying to catch these creatures while young in hopes of training them as guardians or as martial aid in the conquest of Unther. The Mulan do not suspect that the rain-summoning spells of the sarrukh are behind these developments; instead they blame the Red Wizards of Thay for their infamous weather-controlling spells.

samarach

Capitol: Samargol

Population: 434,510 (humans 99% [Tashalans 80%, Chultans 19%, Halruaans (Nimbrese) 1%], yuan-ti 1%)

Government: Monarchy (vassal state of Nimbral)

Religions: Leira (Cyric), Squamata the Black (Sseth [now Set])

Imports: Weapons

Exports: Pearls, salt, spices

Alignment: CN, CE

The Hidden Kingdom of Samarach lies along the southern shore of the Chultan Peninsula, between Thindol and the Jungles of Chult. Although independent of Nimbral, Samarach is a vassal state of the Seahaven ruled by one of the twelve Nimbral Lords. Mountain passes leading to Samarach are cloaked in veils of illusion (treat as widespread *hallucinatory terrain* effects made permanent), and the kingdom's settlements are protected by high walls and overlapping *permanent images*.

Life and society

The ophiophobic inhabitants of Samarach are consumed with the fear that traitors lurk in their midst. Trust is rare, even among family members, and lying is the cultural norm.

While all adults are expected to contribute to the defense of the realm, those who practice spellcasting—particularly spells from the school of Illusion—are most highly regarded. A sharp cultural split divides the Nimbrese nobles from the Chultan and Tashlutan commoners. Although there has been no hint of rebellion, cultural and class differences continue to rankle a sizable percentage of the populace.

Samarach is governed by an individual known as the High Phantasmage. The position rotates among Nimbran archmages, each of whom assumes the title and rules from a few years to a few decades before surrendering the rulership to another. The current ruler, High Phantasmage Meleghost Zoaster (CN male human illusionist 20/archmage 5), has already governed for many years, and whispers among the Nimbrese nobility suggest that he has no intention of returning to Nimbral. Some attribute this decision to the burgeoning power of the Leiran (Cyricist) priests, who settled in Samarach in large numbers after the Time of Troubles, when the Nimbral Lords banned any state religion or organized priesthood in the Seahaven.

Samarach is extremely unwelcoming to outsiders. In fact, its nobles often use *scrying* to spy on unwanted visitors and then afflict them with *nightmares* from afar until they leave. Any outsiders who seem to pose a true danger are attacked repeatedly from the shadows by *phantasmal killers*. Although foreign merchants are not permitted in the Hidden Kingdom, a handful of Samarachans who have approval from the High Phantasmage to act as merchants occasionally set sail from the port of Samargol or travel overland via the Sormarl Pass. Despite all these precautions, the Hidden Kingdom's inhabitants are consumed with ophiophobia, and pogroms against suspected agents of the serpentfolk are not uncommon.

Major geographical features

Numerous natural landmarks dot the realm of Samarach.

Beacon Rocks: This cluster of a dozen or so barren islets lies in the Great Sea, almost midway between the Snout of Omgar and the Seahaven of Nimbral. On the largest of these rocks stands the Beckoning Tower of Shoon (formerly the Beacon Tower of Shoon), which was built as a lighthouse during the reign of Shoon IV. Like the Sea Towers of Irphong and Nemessor, its better-known cousins in the Nelanther Isles, the Beckoning Tower is 40 feet high and 25 feet across. A wooden door at the base leads to a winding stair along the outer wall, which gives access to three levels of empty chambers. At the top of the tower shines a *continual flame* effect that is visible for miles.

After the fall of the Shoon, an unknown spellcaster attached a powerful effect similar to a *sympathy* spell (caster level 20th) to this tower, and now any human who sees the structure or its light is magically drawn toward it. Efforts to dispel this effect have come to naught, and now the light that once guided ships to safe passage far from the shores of the Wild Coast instead forces vessels rounding the Horn of Chult to hug the peninsula's southern coast or risk foundering on the Beacon Rocks.

Narubel Pass: This all-but-forsaken pass connects the city-state of Narubel with the town of Taruin by way of the depths of the Samarlogh. Even if trade were still permitted between the two cities, the dangers of the Samarlogh make such travel infeasible.

River Samar: This peaceful river arises from a confluence of creeks near the town of Taruin and winds its way to the Bay of Omgar, draining the Sanrach Basin. The banks of the river are lined with small farming hamlets, and flat-bottomed merchant scows ply its waters. Because the populace lives in fear that water-dwelling serpentfolk might swim up this vital artery, massive dwarf-forged nets block the mouth of the river, and smaller versions are raised and lowered at checkpoints spaced approximately 10 miles apart between Samargol and Taruin.

Samarlogh, The: Northwestern Samarach includes the Samarlogh—the southeasternmost tip of the Jungles of Chult, which is cut off from the rest of the great forest by the western Sanrach Mountains. Samarachan legends speak of Squamata the Black, the embodiment of the ever-encroaching jungle that swallows up anyone who dares the dark depths of the Samarlogh. Although Samarachan warriors regularly patrol the jungle's borders, the depths of the Samarlogh are true wilderness areas inhabited by flocks of corollaxes^{MM2} and carnivorous forest sloths^{MM2}, as well as countless other monsters. A few abandoned strongholds of the Sauringar yuan-ti tribe also lie within its depths.

Sanrach Mountains: This semicircular mountain chain partially surrounds the Sanrach Basin, nearly dividing the Jungles of Chult from the rest of the Chultan Peninsula. The heavily forested eastern slopes of the western Sanrach Mountains form the western edge of the Samarlogh. These jungle-covered foothills support scattered populations of blood apes^{MM2} and cloaked apes^{MM2}.

Snout of Omgar, The: This rocky, uninhabited peninsula extends south into the Great Sea, separating Samar Bay from the waters of the Wild Coast. The Snout is named for the great sea serpent (treat as a sea drake^{FF} advanced to 36 HD) that lairs in a large sea cave on the western side of its tip. Omgar's outrageous toll varies according to the beast's whim, but most ships quietly pay it regardless of amount, since ships that stray too far away from land risk foundering on the Beacon Rocks. The area's lesser caves are home to tribes of yurians (known locally as aldani, or lobster-men).

Sormarl Pass: This narrow pass winds through the southwestern reaches of the Sanrach Mountains, connecting the Thidolian town of Samagard with the Samarachan town of Sorl. The pass is cloaked in *hallucinatory terrain* spells, and only heavily armed caravans dare to traverse it. From time to time, an individual vanishes from a passing caravan, leaving only an eerie, high-pitched whine in his wake. This phenomenon has given rise to rumors that at least one ethereal marauder haunts the area.

Important Sites

Samarach boasts several significant towns and cities.

Mines of Selgol: First established in the waning days of the Shoon Imperium, the mines of Selgol are among the most productive salt mines of the Chultan Peninsula. Their output has been shipped east and north to the lands bordering the Shining Sea and the Lake of Steam for centuries.

In the Year of Writhing Darkness (572 DR), deep-digging Thindolese miners broke through to the Underdark region known as the Firelands. In the centuries since, firenewt marauders and salamanders from the Burning Rift have plagued the mines of Selgol, and they still pose a constant threat to the doughty miners.

Rassatan (Small City, 10,936): The City of Gilded Pearls nestles in a steep-sided bowl at the head of Rassatan Bay. A high stone wall divides the city from the docks below. A single gate leads through the center of the wall, and a well-patrolled tunnel leads through the back of the bowl to another fortified gatehouse overlooking the fields of the Sanrach Basin. The inhabitants of Rassatan dwell in small burrows carved into the terraced walls of the bowl. The City of Gilded Pearls is best known for the oyster beds that lie beneath the shallow waters of the bay. These prolific beds produce the highest-quality golden pearls available in Faerûn.

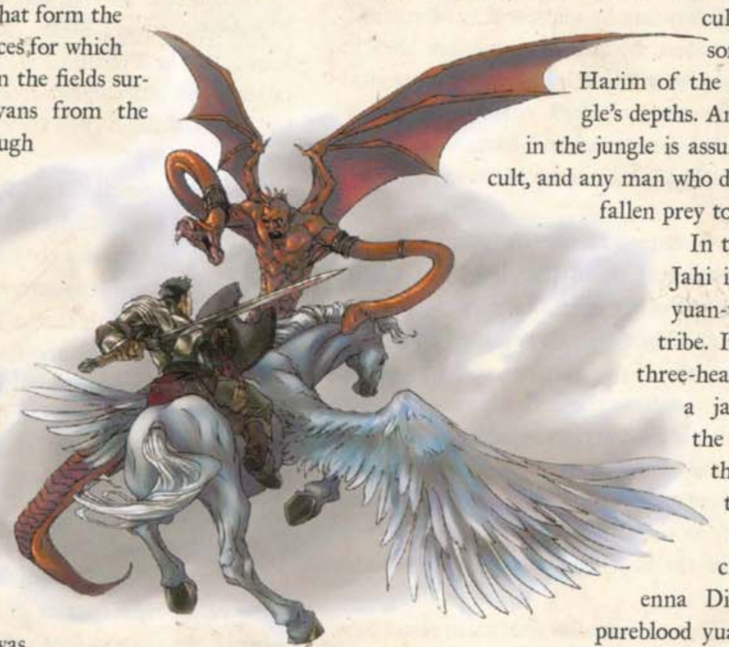
Samargol (Metropolis, 105,731): On the eastern bank of the River Samar, at the head of Samar Bay, is the City of Veils, the home of nearly a quarter of Samarach's population. Although most of the citizens (both male and female) do wear masks or veils in public, the city's name actually stems from the countless illusions woven by the Nimbrese. These dweomers make the city appear to be little more than a handful of shacks and a small lord's keep from the outside and the grandest city in all of Faerûn from the inside.

A heavily fortified double ring wall protects this sprawling city. The inner wall encircles a low hill on which most of the Nimbrese aristocrats dwell, including the High Phantasmage. The majority of the city's real wealth is concentrated in this district. No gates mar the inner wall's strength, so at least in theory, only those who can fly (either magically or mounted on pegasi) can enter or escape this isolated enclave. In fact, a handful of tunnels penetrate the foundations of the wall, but their use is illegal, as are attempts to climb the wall.

The outer wall encircles the bulk of the city and is pierced by only three tiny gates. One leads north to Taruin, another leads east to Rassatan and Sorl, and the third opens onto the river. The city docks lie outside the walls within arrow range of the guards atop them. All traffic into or out of the city is physically and magically searched. This high degree of security results in a general scarcity of most goods and prices that are double those elsewhere in Faerûn.

Sorl (Large Town, 4,612): This garrison town protects the western end of Sormarl Pass. Built into the walls of the steep-sided gorge that marks the western end of the pass, the town is divided into two halves: Northface and Southface. The cave mouths that honeycomb both sections are linked by narrow stone staircases carved into the rock. Northface serves as living quarters for the legion of troops based here, while Southface is home to the merchants who cater to the needs of the soldiers and their families. A pair of stout, fortified walls known as the Westgate and the Eastgate block the western and eastern ends of the gorge, respectively.

Taruin (Large City, 23,899): The City of Seven Spices lies near the confluence of the creeks that form the River Samar. Many of the rare spices for which Samarach is known are gathered in the fields surrounding Taruin, and salt caravans from the mines of Selgol regularly pass through this walled town on their way to the scows that will transport their cargo to Samargol. A large contingent of Samargol's army is based in Taruin, and its leaders use the city as a staging area for extended patrols along the borders of the Samarlogh.



Flying Hunt

Illustration by Kalman Andrasofszky

Regional History

The isolated realm of Samarach was once the western half of Thindol. At that time, its populace was dominated by Tashlutan immigrants who settled the Sanrach Basin after the Tashalar Campaigns (circa 300 DR). (See the Regional Histories of the Tashalar and Thindol, below, for more details.)

In the Year of Many Serpents (605 DR), the Thindolese in both the Chultan-dominated east and the Tashlutan-dominated west unmasked a host of yuan-ti infiltrators in their midst. During the months of anarchy that followed this event, roving bands of ophiophobes attacked anyone they suspected of possessing serpentine ancestry. Unlike the eastern Thindolese, the folk of western Thindol fled *en masse*, marshaling a great flotilla of ships and sailing for the fabled isle of Nimbral.

After a great storm dashed much of this slapdash fleet against the Beacon Rocks, a legion of pegasi-mounted Knights of the Flying Hunt appeared above the remnants of the fleet and ordered the Thindolese to return to their homes. After listening to their pleas for mercy, Lord Samar, a Nimbral Lord and the commander of the Nimbran legion, agreed to return to the Chultan Peninsula with the refugees and drive the yuan-ti from the Sanrach Basin.

Once the survivors returned home, the archmage Samar cloaked the mountain passes and roads of the realm in veils of illusion, then began a decades-long hunt for the agents of the yuan-ti. In time, the western Thindolese began calling their isolated land Samarach, after the first Nimbral Lord to rule it actively, and the inhabitants of the realm came to consider it a vassal state of distant Nimbral.

Plots and Rumors

Despite the tight security of Samarach, rumors abound of serpentfolk plots.

Harim of the Jahi: Rumor holds that a debauched, hedonistic cult of serpent-worshiping sorceresses known as the Harim of the Jahi dwells in the jungle's depths. Any woman who vanishes in the jungle is assumed to have joined the cult, and any man who disappears is said to have fallen prey to its members.

In truth, the Harim of the Jahi is a cabal of pureblood yuan-ti from the Sauringar tribe. Its leader is an undead, three-headed serpent known as a jahi^{MM2} that embodies the unfulfilled desires of the yuan-ti to reclaim the Chultan Peninsula. The jahi's current chosen one is Ssentenna Di'Nastassa (CE female pureblood yuan-ti cleric 5 of Sseth/sorcerer 5/mystic theurge 8), a snake-tongued seductress of unparalleled beauty.

Serpentes

Capitol: Ss'inthee'ssaree
Population: 126,487 (yuan-ti 58%, wild dwarves 41%, sarrukh 1%)
Government: Empire (in principle), Tribal Alliance (in practice)
Religions: Sseth (now Set) (sarrukh, yuan-ti), Thard Harr (wild dwarves)
Imports: Slaves
Exports: Furs, herbs, jewelry
Alignment: LE, NE

The Serpentes Empire once stretched from the Lhairghal (Halruaa's West Wall) to the Peaks of Flame, and from Sheirtalar to the Snout of Omgar. Now, however, its leaders openly rule only in the Black Jungles. Still rent by the ancient tribal feuds that laid the empire low, Serpentes has only recently reawakened from centuries of somnolence and begun to reassert its authority over the Chultan Peninsula.

Life and Society

Of the five great yuan-ti tribes in the Chultan Peninsula, only three have significant holdings in the Black Jungles. At present, these tribes are openly contesting with each other for the throne of Sseth. Two of those tribes, House Eselemas and House Jennestas, have forged a loose alliance. In reality, however, that pact is more an acknowledgement of shared weakness against the more powerful Se'Sehen tribe than a sign of unity of purpose.

Each tribe claims a number of overgrown steadings in the depths of the jungle, from which its members dominate the surrounding terrain. Since the ever-encroaching jungle threatens any building left untended, most such habitations remain semi-ruined, even though gangs of slaves do their best to keep them habitable.

Until recently, the bulk of the serpentfolk in this area displayed a curious apathy that left them content to hunt, exploit and torture their slaves while dreaming of ancient glory. Since the Time of Troubles and the brief appearance of Sseth's avatar, however, centuries of such somnolence have given way to a newfound energy. Much of that energy is directed at undermining the plots of rival tribes and investigating the mystery of Sseth's condition, but the yuan-ti of Serpentes have also begun to work in concert against their common foe—humanity. In accordance with the Sacred Way of Sseth, the yuan-ti have begun placing their agents into positions of power so as to weaken neighboring realms from within. This strategy is in part one of necessity, since the human kingdoms currently possess far more military might than the yuan-ti do, but it also ties in with a prophecy. Yuan-ti legends speak of the rebirth of Sseth in mortal form heralding the rise of Serpentes, and no tribe wishes to move prematurely before the god (or his successor) returns.

Like yuan-ti elsewhere, the inhabitants of Serpentes are divided into three primary castes: abominations, halfbloods, and purebloods. The abominations rule through the halfbloods, who in turn command the purebloods. Tainted ones and broodguards are relatively new castes that rank below purebloods but above slaves. Anathemas are considered divine minions of Sseth, so they stand apart from the normal caste system. Holy guardians and mageslayers (see Chapter 6) also hold unique ranks outside the caste system, although most are accorded the privileges of clerics and arcane spellcasters, respectively. The few surviving sarrukh are treated with reverence and their direct orders are always obeyed, but they lack the power to unite the tribes or truly rule them.

Major Geographical Features

The Serpentes Empire encompasses a wide range of geographical features.

Black Jungles: So thickly canopied that the jungle floor is cloaked in near-darkness (treat as shadowy during the day), the Black Jungles are home to thousands of animals, plants, and insects. So great is the diversity here that several hundred kinds of creatures may reside in each acre. Of the trees known elsewhere in Faerûn, mangroves, silverbarks, suth trees, and zalantar trees are most common. All kinds of predators stalk the Black Jungles, but carnivorous plants, dinosaurs, giant constrictor snakes, and winged vipers are most common. The southwestern reaches are dominated by tribes of primates, including apes, blood apes^{MM2}, cloaked apes^{MM2}, and gambols^{MM2}, as well as girallons, gorillas (treat as pacifistic apes), and monkeys. The yuan-ti rule supreme here, patrolling the jungles regularly and driving the most dangerous predators east into the Mhair Jungles to protect the ruins of Mhairshaulk.

Remnants of the past glory of Serpentes are everywhere, though most such ruins are overgrown with jungle plants. Stone statues of long-dead yuan-ti abominations and crumbling walls are the most common signs of past habitation, but larger ruins can be found as well. Ancient caches of building stones, pottery, glass, and metalwork are sometimes revealed when giant trees fall in storms. Those who dig beneath such troves may find ancient catacombs stretching deep into the earth.

Lake Lemas: This small, freshwater lake forms part of the border between the Black and the Mhair Jungles. Fed by innumerable streams and two small, unnamed rivers, it sends its waters to the River Lemas and thereby to the Lapal Sea. Lake Lemas lies at the heart of the Eselemas tribal lands, and numerous overgrown holds dot its western shore. The lake itself is home to a clutch of elder tojanidas, which the Eselemas clerics called forth from the Elemental Plane of Water long ago to defend the tribe.

Lapal Sea: The Lapal Sea is actually a freshwater lake surrounded by jungle—the Black Jungles to the west and the Mhair Jungles to the east. The cool breezes blowing over the water break the sun's unforgiving heat and disperse the swarming clouds of gnats and biting insects that hover about the area.

The lake is fed by four rivers—two originating in a spur of the Hazar mountain range to the north, and the other two bubbling up in the midst of the Mhair Jungle. Water from the lake then flows gently toward the Great Sea to the south. Boats are almost unknown on the Lapal Sea, since the yuan-ti of the Sseradess tribe prefer to swim, and those of other tribes ride harnessed elasmosauruses^{MM2}. Herds of wild elasmosauruses dominate the Lapal Sea, although ahuizotls^{FF}, chuuls, and darktentacles^{MM2} are numerous as well.

Lapalgulph: At the mouth of the River Lapal is a brackish bay that drains the Black and Mhair Jungles into the Great Sea. The Jennestas tribe keeps careful watch over these waters from the jungle-covered hills on the western side of the Lapalgulph, and a Gargantuan dragon turtle (advanced to 30 HD) guards the waters below in exchange for regular offerings from the yuan-ti. The eastern edge of the Lapalgulph marks the beginning of a vast mangrove swamp that stretches almost to Mhairhetel. This area is the preserve of numerous solitary sword spiders.

Mhair Jungles: The Mhair Jungles lie between the Lapal Sea and the West Wall of Halruaa. This dark, tropical forest contains all manner of plant and animal life, most of it unknown anywhere else. Large numbers of carnivorous plants, duskwoods, phandars, shadowtops, silverbarks, suth, and zalantars grow in this jungle, along with a profusion of less dangerous plant life.

Once the center of the sarrukh empire of Mhairshaulk, the Mhair Jungles are now home to all manner of monsters. Because the yuan-ti of Serpentes consider this land sacred, they come here only to hunt, scour the ruins of Mhairshaulk, and drive off intruders. The northern Mhair Jungles are the preserve of dire tigers, digesters, and many nomadic tribes of wild dwarf hunters. Except for the absence of yuan-ti tribes, this area bears a strong resemblance to the Black Jungles. The wetter southern reaches eventually give way to vast mangrove swamps hunted by solitary sword spiders and nagahydras.

Yuan-ti anathemas dwell in and among the most important ruins of Mhairshaulk, attended by lesser yuan-ti who have foresworn their tribal allegiances. Other major ruins are claimed by solitary Faerûnian ha-nagas and nagahydras. Lesser ruins are uncommon on the surface because the jungle growth has wholly devoured them over the course of millennia. Scattered sinkholes throughout the Mhair Jungles lead into the Serpent Deeps, and explorers are advised to watch out for sinkhole traps set by dwarven hunters.

River Amarast: This sluggish watercourse wends deep into the heart of the Se'Sehen tribe's territory. The river is home to the ti-khana elasmosauruses$^{\text{MM2}}$ that some yuan-ti employ as steeds.

River Chun: This fast-moving river races through a narrow gorge in the heart of the Jennestas tribe's territory. The river is too shallow for waterborne travel, but the limestone walls of the gorge are honeycombed with caverns that serpentfolk of all tribes employ as crypts. Several of the deepest tunnels are said to connect with the Serpent Deeps, and individual sarrukh occasionally arise from hibernation far below the surface and make their way to this region to forage.

River Lapar: Forming the southern boundary between the Mhair and the Black Jungles, the River Lapar marks the eastern edge of the Jennestas tribe's territory (with the exception of the Mhairhetel enclave). Mangrove swamps line both banks of the river, making it difficult to discern where the waterway ends and the jungle begins.

About halfway between the Lapal Sea and the Lapalgulph, seven stone pillars rise from the depths of the river to 40 feet or more above the waterline. The Pillars of the Sarrukh, as they are called, are inscribed with well-worn Draconic runes that detail the history of ancient Mhairshaulk under both sarrukh and yuan-ti rule.

River Lemas: The River Lemas drains Lake Lemas into the Lapal Sea and marks part of the boundary between the Mhair and the Black Jungles. It also marks the eastern border of the Eselemas territories, so its banks are often patrolled by yuan-ti. Somewhere along the river's length lies the shattered keel of a *Halruaan skyship* that was protected from decay by ancient preservative magics. No one knows what cargo it carried or what became of its crew, but the fact that Halruaan explorers continue to search for it suggests that the ruined ship may yet contain a priceless treasure.

River Mhair: The River Mhair once wound through the heart of Mhairshaulk, and most of the remaining sarrukh ruins in this area lie along its banks. From time to time, the river adjusts its course to reveal new ruins, but for the most part, this waterway is as wild as the enveloping jungles.

River Tharynd: This short and wild river plummets south from the Delphin Mountains to the northernmost bay of the Lapal Sea. An ancient trail from the Abbey of Tharynd (see below) winds along its western bank, and the Se'Sehen tribe patrols that area regularly to guard against treachery from the Eselemas tribe as well as foolhardy interlopers.

Serpent Deeps: The Serpent Deeps lie beneath the Black and the Mhair Jungles, forming a vast subterranean network of caverns that stretches from Lapalgard to Mhairhetel to Delselar. At the heart of this extensive cavern system is the Lapal Undersea, which is fed by water leaching from the lake above. The Serpent Deeps are home to warring tribes of troglodytes, a few Mhairshaulk sarrukh, and trens—lizardfolk-troglodyte hybrids bred at the height of Serpentes. Although hibernating sarrukh have carved out small complexes throughout the Serpent Deeps, most are clustered around the Lapal Undersea. From time to time, the yuan-ti send emissaries to consult with their creators, but such requests for aid are usually ignored.

important sites

Serpentes encompasses numerous thriving cities and towns, as well as hundreds of ruins.

Mhairhetel (Small City, 9,782): At the southern tip of the Mhair Jungles lies the City of Renegades. This isolated redoubt is home to outcasts from nations all along the Great Sea. Because ships flying any flag (or even none at all) are welcome at Mhairhetel's docks, the city has become a port of call for pirates from Narubel and Yaulazna (the hidden Bay of Pirates in southeastern Halruaa), as well as a haven for slavers and disreputable merchants. The city's reputation as a pirate port has so far protected it well against attacks from the sea.

Hetel Hastalhorn, a prominent Halruaan archmage who sought to exploit the hidden riches of the Mhair Jungles, founded the City of Renegades in the Year of Banished Wisdom (–125 DR). Within a year, Hetel had vanished and the settlement was all but abandoned. But every year thereafter, new immigrants arrived seeking a home far from the lands of their birth, and Mhairhetel slowly grew into a viable city.

For centuries, the yuan-ti tribes of Serpentes have found Mhairhetel useful. Until the recent alliance of the Se'Sehen tribe with the Rundeen merchant consortium, the City of Renegades offered the only marketplace through which the yuan-ti could trade with distant lands. Moreover, most humans of the Great Sea lands who are interested in exploring the Mhair Jungles begin their journeys from this port—a fact that makes them easy to observe and track.

However, the yuan-ti have always ensured that one of their own rules the City of Renegades, and that agents of the serpentfolk control all the hidden levels of power. The current ruler of Mhairhetel is Istasfis Nsaran (NE male pureblood yuan-ti fighter 7), a member of the Jennestas tribe.

Ss'dath'in'ssatath: Built along the western shore of Lake Lemas, Ss'dath'in'ssatath was once the provincial capitol of the territory stretching from Sheirtalar to the Lapal Sea and from the Delphin Mountains to Talath Pass. Most of the city has fallen into ruin, but the remaining structures house the bulk of the Eselemas tribe. The builders of Ss'dath'in'ssatath favored wall carvings over statues, so the façades that have not yet crumbled are adorned with bas-reliefs depicting writhing serpents and nagalike faces.

Ss'inthee'ssaree: The sprawling, ruined city of Ss'inthee'ssaree lies on the northwestern shore of the Lapal Sea. Once the capitol of Serpentes, Ss'inthee'ssaree fell into ruin after the disappearance of Sseth's avatar in the Year of Dreams (10 DR) and the subsequent feuding among yuan-ti tribes over who would succeed him as emperor. After centuries of intertribal skirmishing, the Se'Sehen tribe finally cemented its control over Ss'inthee'ssaree in the sixth century Dalereckoning. Since then, members of this tribe have used their slaves to clear the ruins of debris and rebuild wherever possible. Without the support of the other tribes, however, the Se'Sehen can hope for little more than to keep the jungle from reclaiming more of the ruins.

A central area known as the Pit of Vipers still forms the center of yuan-ti power in the Black and Mhair Jungles. Priests of Sseth—and most other yuan-ti, regardless of tribe—consider the Pit of Vipers the most holy location on the face of Faerûn. A vast egg chamber, tended by broodguards, lies under its central altar. Deep in the bowels of the temple, a *portal* links the priests of the Se'Sehen with their greatest allies, the yuan-ti of Hlondeth. Before the holiest altar of Sseth, where the avatar himself coiled while he ruled Serpentes, lies a shallow pit full of writhing snakes. In the center of this pit stands a raised dais on which no snakes crawl. Inscribed with a mystical pattern formed of snakelike shapes, the dais serves as a keyless *portal* that activates 5 rounds after any creature sets foot on its surface. Yuan-ti accessing the *portal* use that time to assume postures of reverence and respect. The *portal* transports all creatures standing on the dais at the instant it activates to an identical temple in Hlondeth called the Scaled Halls of Varae. Because the two temples are exact images of each other, users are often unaware that they have gone anywhere at all.

Ss'yin'tia'saminass: Situated midway between the head of the River Chun and Dolsel Pass, Ss'yin'tia'saminass was once the provincial capitol of the southern Black Jungles and the Thindol Basin. The yuan-ti who dwelled in this city experimented upon the various primate species native to the region in hopes of creating a perfect slave race, but that effort was abandoned after the fall of Serpentes. Today, the surrounding region is overrun with the progeny of those experimental primates. Thus, in a sense, Ss'yin'tia'saminass is the legendary "City of Apes" that most Thindolese tales incorrectly place in the Guth Mountains. In recent centuries, the Jennestas tribe has claimed the ruins of Ss'yin'tia'saminass as its base, seeking to recover the ancient beast-shaping magics that their creators once employed. Rather than repeat the failures of their ancestors, however, the Jennestas have begun experimenting on human and halfling slaves. The latter were abducted from the borders of the Southern Lluirwood and brought back to the Black Jungles by way of a two-way *portal*.

Regional History

The southernmost empire of the sarrukh was Mhairshaulk, which was founded about –34,800 DR and extended westward from the Lhairghal to the Jungles of Chult. The Mhairshaulkans are believed to have created nagas, pterafolk, and troglodytes, as well as numerous other races long since lost. The yuan-ti were the results of experiments that joined primitive humans with the sarrukh of Mhairshaulk, with varying amounts of serpent blood added to the mix.

Unlike such contemporaries as Isstosseffifil and Okoth, sarrukh-ruled Mhairshaulk declined gradually, sinking slowly into somnolence circa –33,500 DR. The sarrukh slowly dwindled in number, and one by one, the remaining individuals entered a cycle of extended hibernation alternating with brief periods of activity. As the great clans of the sarrukh withdrew from the daily governance of their realm, Mhairshaulk increasingly became the preserve of the yuan-ti. Although the theocratic vrael olo ruled the heart of Mhairshaulk for millennia, the rising empires of the batrachi and aearee ensured that the yuan-ti would never achieve the dominance that their creators had enjoyed.

By the close of the Time of Dragons (circa –24,000 DR), yuan-ti-ruled Mhairshaulk had all but collapsed, thanks to repeated assaults on its cities by the great wyrms of the south. Around this time, an army of winged serpents known as couatls appeared in the Jungles of Chult from lands to the west, called into service by the god Ubtao. In the centuries that followed, these rival creations of the sarrukh battled each other for control of the peninsula. Time and again the yuan-ti were forced to concede their westernmost holdings to the couatls, until the war ended in a stalemate with the Hazur Mountains as the dividing line.

For millennia thereafter, the Chultan Peninsula remained the preserve of powerful individual serpentfolk, but no organized empires existed there. Around the time of Netheril's founding, the couatls began to decline precipitously in number, so they decided to seek out another race to keep the western end of the Chultan Peninsula free of yuan-ti influence. Eventually, they settled on the human tribes of a distant continent to the southwest and preached to them the teachings of Ubtao. The Eshowe, the Tabaxi, and the Thinguth tribes, as well as several others that accepted Ubtao's message, followed the winged serpents in a great pilgrimage across the seas to the Jungles of Chult in –2809 DR.

The tribes landed on the Wild Coast and marched inland to the Peaks of Flame, where the avatar of Ubtao welcomed them. After all but a handful of winged serpents had withdrawn from southwestern Faerûn, the Father of Chult's avatar founded the great city of Mezro in –2637 DR. He dwelt there for a time among the Tabaxi, the greatest of the tribes, while the other tribes scattered throughout the jungles. Eventually the Father of Dinosaurs withdrew, but not before imbuing Chult itself with a portion of his essence. As an unintended consequence of this action, a shadow of Ubtao was released into the ground.

Without the direct rule of the Father of Chult, a great war broke out among the tribes, lasting from the Year of Dripping Daggers (–438 DR) to the Year of Unleashed Sorrow (–122 DR). During the conflict, the Eshowe released the Shadow Giant from the floor of the Valley of Lost Honor. After nearly destroying Mezro and the Tabaxi, the giant (who was called Eshowdow) turned on the Eshowe and nearly annihilated them. The remaining tribes (except the Eshowe and the Thinguth) were assimilated into the Tabaxi tribe, whose diverse peoples became known collectively as Chultans.

The arrival of the Chultans, who lived free of oppression, indirectly inspired a revolt among the Lapal tribes that had been serving the yuan-ti as slaves. After centuries of scattered uprisings, the Lapaliiyans finally escaped in –1732 DR, fleeing north and east to the lands now claimed by Lapaliiya and Halruaa. Deprived of their slave race, the yuan-ti were forced to capture tribes of lizardfolk from the Great Swamp of Rethild and bring them back to the shores of the Lapal Sea and the Thingulph.

In the Year of Netted Dreams (–320 DR), the Hss'tafi tribe of yuan-ti was magically called to the ruins of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun by the ophidians of Najara. The tribe's disappearance from its traditional holdings on the western shores of the Lapal Sea upset the long-standing status quo among the neighboring yuan-ti tribes, precipitating two decades of intense warfare amongst the remaining yuan-ti in Mhairshaulk. When civil war threatened to destroyed the ranks of his remaining worshipers, the long-somnolent Merrshaulk responded by dispatching a winged avatar named Sseth through one of the *portals* beneath the Peaks of Flame in the Year of Erupting Crypts (–304 DR).

Under the guidance of Sseth, the yuan-ti forged the empire of Serpentes on the ruins of Mhairshaulk. Because the Lapal states had been severely weakened by the Empire Plague (–375 DR), the yuan-ti tribes had no trouble conquering all the lands from the Lhairghal to the Peaks of Flame by the Year of Sunned Serpents (–189 DR). Sseth's reign as emperor of Serpentes abruptly ended in the Year of Dreams (10 DR), when he vanished beneath the Peaks of Flame. Some say that his disappearance resulted from a failed attempt to unleash Dendar the Night Serpent and thus end the world; others say he withdrew deliberately to undergo apotheosis. Whatever the reason for his departure, the clergy of Sseth began to venerate their vanished emperor as Merrshaulk reborn. The once-allied tribes of yuan-ti began to feud over who should succeed their one and only emperor while the empire collapsed around them.

In the centuries since the fall of Serpentes, the yuan-ti tribes have continued to dominate the Mhair and the Black Jungles, and to a lesser extent the lands now claimed by Samarach and Thindol. Nominal rule of the peninsula, however, passed to the nation of Tashtan, then to the Shoon Imperium, and then to the individual kingdoms of Lapaliiya, Samarach, the Tashalar, and Thindol. Although the yuan-ti have never agreed upon a new emperor of Serpentes, the tribes have begun to work in concert once again, collectively exerting influence over many of the surrounding states.

The Time of Troubles brought new energy to the serpentfolk when the avatar of Sseth reappeared briefly above the waters of the Lapal Sea just before battling the dinosaur-avatar of Ubtao on the eastern edge of the Jungles of Chult. But after the Avatar Crisis, Set and the traitorous Okothian sarrukh bound the Great Serpent in a slumber of endless nightmares. Once again the yuan-ti are actively seeking to subjugate the human realms of the Chultan Peninsula and the Shining Sea. At the direction of the Mhairshaulk sarrukh, small bands of serpentfolk have also begun wandering Faerûn in search of clues about the nature of Sseth's unending slumber and how it might be ended.

plots & rumors

Serpentes is in a constant state of flux, with its inhabitants vying for power and position.

Tribal Warfare: Since the Time of Troubles, the Se'Sehen tribe has grown significantly in power and influence, primarily at the expense of the Eselemas and Jennestas tribes. As their growing armies of broodguards attest, the Se'Sehen have been readying themselves for a war of conquest, which they believe will begin as soon as Sseth returns to reclaim his empire.

The abominations of the other two tribes are all in favor of taking back Serpentes, but not if doing so means subordinating themselves to the Se'Sehen. Rather than initiate a civil war, which they would ultimately lose, agents of both lesser tribes have begun spreading rumors about lost treasures throughout the cities of the South in hopes of drawing human adventurers into Se'Sehen lands. Through such traitorous acts, they hope to weaken the Se'Sehen tribe just enough to raise themselves to prominence before the emperor reclaims his throne. Of course, their plan runs the risk of drawing too many Scaleless Ones into the jungles and thus setting back the plans of all the tribes, but for now the treachery continues.

surkh

Capitol: Surkh
Population: 9,770 (lizardfolk 99.9%, lizard kings 0.1%)
Government: Monarchy
Religions: Semuanya, Tiamat
Imports: Gladiators, weapons
Exports: Seafood
Alignment: LE, NE

The City of Lizards lies on the northern shore of the Deepwash, in the shadow of the Deepwing Mountains. Although Surkh maintains cordial relations with the Emerald Enclave, Lachom (an agricultural community between the Deepwash and the Vilhon Reach), Lheshayl, and Nimpeth, it remains largely isolated from its neighbors. Surkh's inhabitants make their livings by fishing in the Deepwash, and they fear only the ancient dragon turtle that dwells in the depths.

Life and Society

The lizardfolk of Surkh have attained a degree of civilization unmatched by their kindred elsewhere in Faerûn. Despite their isolationism, however, their practice of eating both humanoids convicted of serious crimes and the losers of deadly gladiatorial battles engenders fear among the Scaleless Ones in the surrounding city-states.

Surkhites evince a high degree of loyalty for their monarch, King Griss'tok (CN male lizard king barbarian 9). Griss'tok remains an enigma to outsiders because he receives nonlizardfolk visitors only if they speak Draconic, and then only rarely. A council of tribal chieftains advises the king, but since he can promote or demote them as desired, they usually accede to his will.

Although traditional clan and tribal distinctions remain in force in Surkhite society, Griss'tok actively discourages such loyalties, regularly issuing edicts that force various clans and tribes to unite or divide to weaken their importance. Surkhites are expected to settle their individual and collective differences through ritualized gladiatorial combat at the Arena of Scales. Gladiators can be hired to serve as proxies for one or both parties to a dispute, but the battle's outcome must be honored whether or not the principals physically participate.

Most Surkhites dwell in houses fashioned of baked mudbricks that are built around shaded, communal pools. Labor is confined to the early morning and late evening hours so that most Surkhites can retreat to the cooling waters during the hottest portion of the day. Many of Surkh's inhabitants work as fisherfolk, harvesting the bounty of the sea, and most of the remainder are employed as soldiers or gladiators.

Major Geographical Features

Surkh claims some of the most beautiful landmarks in all of Faerûn.

Deepwash: So named for its unplumbed depths, the Deepwash is the largest freshwater lake between the Shining Sea and the Sea of Fallen Stars. Its clear, cold water teems with countless kinds of fish in sufficient quantity to feed most of Surkh without seriously depleting the supply. Drained by tributaries flowing from the Cloven, Deepwing, and Snowflake Mountains and from Impresk Lake, the Deepwash is drained in turn by the Wintercloak River.

The Deepwash is the home of an immense dragon turtle (advanced to 36 HD), which is known only as the Dragon of the Deeps. Surkhite fisherfolk regard death in the creature's jaws as an honor, though not one that they actively seek. Some sects within the city respect the Dragon of the Deeps to the point of worship and make periodic offerings to it, though the beast has never acknowledged such veneration in any way. The dragon turtle lairs in a flooded, subterranean cavern system that winds its way deep beneath the Spines of Surkh, opening into the lake several hundred feet below the surface. Somewhere within this maze lies the terminus of a one-way *portal* from the Dragon Eyrie.

The western arm of the Deepwash, known as Shalane Lake, is much shallower than the rest of the lake and largely free of the dragon turtle's depredations. Humans from the Shining Plains and Erlkazar usually confine their fishing expeditions to this end of the Deepwash.

Spines of Surkh: The southwesternmost peaks of the Deepwing Mountains, which overlook and encircle the City of Lizards, are known as the Spines of Surkh. Because the Surkhites bury their dead amidst these mountains, the region is littered with shallow tombs. Semuanya's clerics are somewhat lax about erecting wards around such crypts, so many of them have become home to scaled undead creatures, particularly ghouls. At least three of the crypts in this area house the bodies of Okothian sarrukh. Crypt looting is a crime in Surkh, and anyone caught in such an enterprise is consumed alive.

Important Sites

Only a few points of interest stand out from the generally peaceful land of Surkh.

Arena of Scales: This vast amphitheater in the heart of Surkh is rivaled only by those in Manshaka and Reth. The structure is fashioned to resemble a circle of carved stone dinosaurs with their necks, limbs, and tails intertwined. Gladiatorial events are held here twice each tenday, drawing large crowds on a regular basis. Although the majority of the gladiators are lizardfolk, other races (particularly humans) can earn good money fighting on the Scaled Field as proxies of the various factions. Most combats are not to the death; they simply end when one side or the other yields. However, should any participant or sponsor demand a battle to the death, the loser is eaten by the king or one of his nobles.

Deepwing *Portal*: In the Spines of Surkh, high above the City of Lizards, stands a *portal* in the form of a stone slab with serpentine symbols inscribed on its eastern side. This *portal* links the Vilhon Reach with the mouth of the Great Petrified Serpent in the Serpent Hills. Although the lizardfolk of Surkh lay claim to this region, several yuan-ti in the employ of the Serpent Sibyl have recently built a small fort around the *portal*, which they have defended against repeated assaults.

The *portal* activates only when the early-morning sunlight shines full upon the stone. During this period, any creature touching the stone is drawn through the *portal* and deposited in the petrified serpent's mouth in the midst of the Serpent Hills. The nature of the *portal* makes its defense particularly important, since traveling yuan-ti typically arrive at the stone several hours before it can operate and need a safe place to wait for dawn.

Shrine of the First Lizard: Beneath the streets of Surkh lies the Shrine of the First Lizard, a house of worship for the Cult of Tiamat. Led by Deiros Forktongue (LE male Mulan human cleric 9 of Tiamat/hierophant 5 of Tiamat) and Fire of the First Lizard Ssenidak Wyrmspear (LE male lizardfolk fighter 5/cleric 9 of Tiamat/divine champion 5 of Tiamat), the Dragon Queen's followers are growing rapidly in strength and number. At present, the cult controls most of the illicit activities in Surkh, including trade in slaves and black market goods. Members of the cult must still keep their faith secret, but the day is coming when they will be able to challenge the primacy of the church of Semuanya. The Cult of Tiamat is fiercely opposed to the Cult of the Dragon and recently fought off an attempt by its Hlondethan cell to establish a base in the City of Lizards.

Regional History

The City of Lizards began as a nameless human fishing village much like Elupar and Ulkan are today. It was settled by emigrants from Lachom and Nimpeth in the Year of the Deep Wellspring (167 DR).

In the Year of the Cloven Stones (1159 DR), a dragon turtle pursued a band of Okothian sarrukh from the Dragon Eyrie through a *portal* into a flooded cavern system beneath the Spines of Surkh. The sarrukh fled into the Deepwash and then onto the nearest shore, which was coincidentally the site of the aforementioned fishing village. There the dragon turtle finally slew them, destroying much of the village in the process and causing the few human survivors to flee in terror.

In the years that followed, increasing numbers of lizardfolk migrated to the site, drawn by reports that servitors of Semuanya had been seen battling a great wyrm of the depths. The first tribes discovered the bodies of the sarrukh and interred them with honor in the peaks above the village. Their tribal leaders began studying the skins (scrolls) that the sarrukh had left behind, and in time they began to ape their creators in custom and practice.

In the Year of the Claw (1299 DR), Griss'tok's grandfather finally united the tribes and declared himself king. He established the system of gladiatorial combat that serves even today in lieu of normal intertribal and interclan feuding. His son established the precedent that the most powerful offspring of the current king must establish his or her right to become the heir through gladiatorial combat.

Plots and Rumors

Surkh is a relatively peaceful place, but occasional events can draw interest from outside the realm.

Wyrmlings' Exodus: A clutch of black dragons has emerged in Surkh via the *portal* from Dragon Eyrie and fled into the depths of the Deepwash. The wyrmlings seem to be hunting something—possibly an artifact stolen by the sarrukh from Tiamat's hoard. Although the dragons are not yet a threat, King Griss'tok has sent word of his need for brave adventurers to nearby cities, fearing that the wyrmlings will threaten his realm when they grow up. Surkh's monarch dares not employ lizardfolk for such a task because they might establish cults to Tiamat instead of destroying her followers.

Tashalar, The

Capitol: Tashluta
Population: 889,920 (humans 94% [Tashalans 83%, Calishites 12%, Chultans 3%, Shaarans 1%], lizardfolk 4%, yuan-ti 1%)
Government: Merchant oligarchy
Religions: Amphisbaena the World Serpent (Sseth [now Set]), Chauntea, Malar, Savras, Talona, Waukeen
Imports: Beef, calantra, fruit, silver, slaves
Exports: Calantra wood carvings, cheese, crossbows, dyed fabric, glass, olive oil, olives, seafood, ships, spices, wine
Alignment: CN, N, NE

Although many use the term "the Tashalar" to broadly refer to the Tashtan Coast, which stretches from Narubel to Sheirtalar, in truth it refers only to the Tashalar Basin, which is encircled by the peaks of the Hazur Mountains. The Tashalar is a verdant coastal area full of bountiful vineyards, gardens, and groves of olive trees. Tashalaran harvests are shipped north to ports in Calimshan and along the Lake of Steam, and from there to the rest of Faerûn. Tashalaran grapes are so perfect that even the worst vineyard of the region produces wines worth 100 gp or more in Waterdeep.

Life and Society

Tashalarans are famed for their skilled craftsmanship, hunting prowess, shipbuilding, exotic spicy cuisine, and winemaking, and they have adopted much of the high culture of Calimshan over the years. Tashlutans (as inhabitants of the capitol city are known) are warm and welcoming to strangers, and many speak foreign tongues. Attitudes quickly change in the smaller settlements of the countryside, however.

Most of the Chultans, lizardfolk, and Shaarans living in the Tashalar are slaves purchased in foreign markets. But slaves comprise only a small percentage of the total population, despite the willingness of Tashalaran merchants to traffic in sentient lives. Most Tashalaran commoners labor in the fields, groves, or vineyards, although some work as sailors, shipwrights, sailmakers and provisioners. The wealthy merchant families dwell in ostentatious palaces, dividing their time between their country estates (most of which include a hamlet just outside the villa walls) and the elite districts of Tashluta. Hunting is a popular sport among the merchant nobility, and the bravest hunters seek out the deadly denizens of the Black Jungles (albeit in the tamer reaches north of the Tashan Gap) as trophies.

The merchants of the Tashalar defend their country with a fleet of fast ships, most of which have fallen under the influence of a consortium of aggressive traders known as the Rundeen. This group, based in Tashluta, effectively controls the ruling Tashalaran oligarchy and dominates all trade into and out of the Tashalar. Despite the loss of their monopoly on shipping on the Shining Sea, the Rundeen also dominate Calishite shipping through a recently revived partnership with the Knights of the Shield, a secretive organization of spies active in Amn, Calimshan, and Tethyr.

Major Geographical Features

The Tashalar is a widely varied region that supports a variety of geographical features.

Cape Talath: This prominent cape is known for its towering cliffs and the fierce tides that endanger any ship that dares the surrounding waters. The centuries-old subterranean passage known as Labrand's Folly (see below) gives rise to these surging waves, and all navigators of the Tashtan Coast give this promontory a wide berth.

Delphin Mountains: The eastern spur of the northern Hazur Mountains, east of the Tashan Gap, is known locally as the Delphin Mountains. Nominally forming the eastern border of the Tashalar, the peaks of this range are the demesne of a tribe of short-tempered stone giants. From their enormous rock mansions situated on remote peaks, they trade gems for fine wine, and access to ancient serpentfolk ruins and lore for dragon turtle meat.

Hazur Mountains: The Hazur Mountains form a natural border between the Tashalar, Thindol, and the Black Jungles. The scattered gold and iron mines in the northwestern Hazur Mountains produce sufficient minerals to support the economies of both the Tashalar and Thindol. The mines on the northern and eastern slopes are operated by Tashalarans, while those on the southern and western slopes are owned by small communities of Thindolese gold dwarves. Clusters of salamanders emerge periodically from abandoned mineshafts that lead down into the Burning Rift in the Underdark, beneath the Jungles of Chult. Soldiers from Thindol patrol the western slopes in the southern half of the range, while the eastern slopes are stalked by the Se'Sehen and Jennestas yuan-ti tribes of the Black Jungles. In the center of the range, deep shafts lead down into the depths, delivering blasts of fresh air to the subterranean waterway known as Labrand's Folly.

Labrand's Folly: In the Year of the Whipped Cur (336 DR), a Halruaan wizard named Labrand came into possession of the Crown of the Mountain, an ancient artifact now worn by Valamaradace, the Dragon Queen of the Silver Marches. He used the powers of the crown to carve a subterranean waterway from the tip of Cape Talath to the head of the Thingulph in Thindol. Airshafts dot the tunnel at random intervals, opening up in the heights of the western Hazur Mountains (including the bottom of one old quarry).

Exactly what Labrand hoped to accomplish by carving the tunnel is unclear, although most suspect that he intended to create a lucrative trade route between the Shining Sea and the Great Sea that would negate the need for a long sea voyage around the Horn of Chult. Whatever Labrand intended, his passage has become home to the water-dwelling yuan-ti of the Sseradess tribe and the kuo-toa of Gathgoolgapool (a city-state in the middle Underdark, located midway between the Shining Sea and the Great Sea and between the Firelands and the Serpent Deeps). If ease of shipping was Labrand's goal, he failed, since the fierce tides that rage through the tunnel as a result of the airshafts render it all but impassable to ships. Furthermore, the surging waters that boil from the passage also make navigation around Cape Talath and near the head of the Thinguth extremely treacherous.

Tashalar Basin: The Tashalar Basin lies at the heart of the Tashtan Coast, encircled by the Hazur Mountains. Dotted with groves of olive trees and vineyards and blessed with warm and sunny weather, the Tashalar Basin is a lovely and fertile vale. Outside of Tashluta, the basin supports a few small farming villages in the central valley and several large merchant estates, most of which are located on the flanks of the encircling peaks and along the northern shore. Most monsters native to the area have been long since slaughtered or driven south into the Black Jungles, although agents of the yuan-ti lurk in most communities. Periodic incursions of scaled and scaleless undead emerging from the many barrows that dot the region are perhaps the greatest threat to security, but ancient weapons are sometimes recovered from such barrows after their former inhabitants have been put to rest.

Tashan Gap, The: The Tashan Gap, with its low, jungle-covered peaks, divides the Delphin Mountains from the rest of the Hazur chain. This section of the Black Jungles is actually a montane cloud forest, perpetually cloaked in mist. All travelers moving between the Tashalar Basin and the Lapal Sea must pass through the Tashan Gap, since the surrounding mountains are too rough and steep for passage.

This section of the mountains is home to a small tribe of fog giants who have long been allied with the Se'Sehen tribe. The giants lair in the ruins of an unnamed fortress built millennia ago during the Couatl-Yuan-ti Wars.

Important Sites

The Tashalar features several sites of interest to adventurers.

Abbey of Tharynd: In the mountains east of the Tashan Gap, the followers of Selûne have established a subterranean abbey in a great natural cavern. At the center of the cavern is the Moonshaft Pool, which lies directly beneath a great natural shaft that opens to the sky above. Side caverns lead off into the Underdark, and dangerous monsters occasionally emerge from below to attack the Moonmaiden's followers. The Pool of Tharynd is said to have many magical powers, and waters taken from it retain the properties of moondraught (see Magic of Faerûn) for at least a day.

Many pilgrims from the city of Sammaresh travel to and from the abbey, despite the hazards that such trips entail and the need to cross into the Tashalar from Lapaliiya. Because of the popularity of this journey, the Moonmaiden's followers have established a series of waystations along the path that threads through the mountains. Pilgrims are granted free passage along the trail, but others must pay a small toll. The trail turns south and leads into the Black Jungles just beyond the abbey, but that part of the trail is wholly unsecured and guarded by yuan-ti of the Se'Sehen tribe.

Crypt of Anthilar: Anthilar, the legendary Archmage of Untisczer, escaped the destruction of his city by the Shoon Imperium in the Year of Wasteful Pride (285 DR) and fled to a secret lair in the mountains west of the Tashan Gap. There he became a lich, working in secret to control the merchants of Tashluta.

In the Year of the Laughing Dead (1056 DR), Anthilar suddenly reappeared in the streets of Tashluta and unmasked the leading oligarch as a yuan-ti abomination in disguise. The resultant spell battle killed the abomination and incapacitated the lich, although his phylactery was never found. Before the lich could reawaken, his body was encased in a massively armored metal "lich's coffin" and shipped north for study by the senior priests of the Skullspire in Tulmon. But the coffin never reached the Myrkulyte Conclave of Doom. Instead, it passed through many hands before coming to rest in the hoard of Tostyn Alaerthmaugh, a young adult male mercury dragon lairing in the depths of Everlake, in the heart of the Evermoors. There it lies to this day, still unopened.

Today, many adventurers search for the legendary Crypt of Anthilar, hoping to retrieve the *spellskins of Mhairshaulk* it reportedly contains. Few, if any, have ever returned. Some believe that Anthilar can manifest as a ghost from afar, and that he returns periodically to ensure that his lair remains inviolate.

House of Night's Embrace: This fortified temple-palace towers over the rest of Tashluta from its position on the western ridge of the city's caldera. The House of Night's Embrace is currently the Lady of Poison's preeminent temple in Faerûn. Led by Lady Doom Thalaera Indlerith (CE female Tashlutan human cleric 12 of Talona/Divine Disciple 10 of Talona), the House is defended by an army of black-masked guards assisted by gargoyles and golems. In its secretive depths, the Priestesses of the Lady's Night make poison, potions that spread disease, and antidotes to both, which they sell at high prices.

Agents of the Night's Embrace tour wealthy houses, noble country seats, and royal courts throughout Faerûn, posing as purveyors of fine wines and perfumes. Their true calling, however, is an open secret. Many of the priestesses employed in this duty dabble in local politics (and love lives) for their own entertainment.

House of the All-Seeing Orb: Since Savras's release from the *Scepter of Savras,* this ancient edifice on the eastern ridge of Tashluta's caldera has regained the preeminence it once held among the temples of the All-Seeing One. This sprawling complex is administered by the Farseer (LN male Tashlutan human cleric 8 of Savras/diviner 10/mystic theurge 10), arguably the most powerful diviner in Faerûn after Zalathorm, the Wizard-King of Halruaa. Home to more than a thousand scholars, the temple houses the College of Divination, the Celestial Observatory, and the Library of Ultimate Truth. Many of the *scrying* devices used in Faerûn and quite a few of the newer arcane divination spells were constructed or researched at this temple.

Procalith: The ruins of Procalith, founded in the Year of Distant Thunder (16 DR), lie at the foot of the Delphin Mountains, overlooking the Dolphingulf. In its heyday, Procalith was ruled by a succession of kings, many of whom were installed by the Shoon Imperium or the Tashalar's ruling oligarchs. It was destroyed by a sorcery-driven storm during the Rage of Wizards in the Year of the Sword's Oath (1142 DR).

Some explorers come to the ruins in search of the Seer of Procalith (see page 28), a mysterious sage-diviner with a nigh-encyclopedic knowledge of Mhairshaulk, Serpentes, and the history and magic of the serpentfolk. Treasure seekers are lured by tales of the *Rod of Auglad,* a unique Netherese scepter thought to have been hidden in the city by Nasana Melnuthquel, who was Magister from 293 DR to 297 DR, and also Auglad's lover. Whether or not the *Rod* exists, Procalith's ruins still contain a fair amount of treasure, as well as a large number of outlaws who have claimed portions of the ruins for their own.

Tashluta (Metropolis, 51,522): The City of Slithering Vines lies in the center of the Tashtan Coast, right in the middle of the Tashalar Basin. Built on the inner slopes of a flooded caldera that serves as the city's harbor, Tashluta is a natural port, a wealthy mercantile city, and the capitol of the Tashalar. The Stormwall, a thin, curving island, protects the harbor from the storms of the Shining Sea. Stormwall Keep runs the length of the island's ridge, protecting the harbor against pirate raids and naval assaults. The depths of Tashluta's harbor are unplumbed, and the flooded lava tubes of the ancient volcano stretch all the way down into the Serpent Deeps (see above).

Tashluta's skyline is dominated by sprawling edifices along the ridges of the ancient caldera. To the west lies the temple of Talona known as House of Night's Embrace, and to the east lies the House of the All-Seeing Orb, a temple to Savras. Along the southern ridgeline stand the mansions of Tashluta's mercantile elite, and below these are the smaller homes of Tashluta's middle and lower classes. In general, proximity to the harbor is regarded as a mark of low status.

The capitol of the Tashalar is the common port for visitors to the Chultan Peninsula because only here do the locals learn many foreign tongues. Tashlutans enjoy playing jokes—usually involving incredibly spicy food—on foreigners. Because the populace is ever fearful of encroachment by the yuan-ti, snakes of any sort and most other reptiles are immediately killed.

Regional History

Tashluta and the Tashalar were first settled by Lapal field hands from Lapaliiya and Calishite merchants in the Year of Plentiful Wine (583 DR). The Tashalar quickly grew to rival its easterly neighbor in wealth, thanks to its lucrative vineyards and olive groves, although both realms coexisted peacefully.

In the Year of Clutching Dusk (–375 DR), rat-laden Calishite trading ships spread the Empire Plague throughout the ports of the Shining Sea, wiping out more than half of the Tashalar's population. Thus, when Sseth founded the Serpentes

Empire in the Year of Erupting Crypts (–304 DR), human resistance against the newly resurgent serpentfolk was weak and disorganized. By the Year of Sunned Serpents (–189 DR), the lizardfolk armies of Serpentes had conquered all of the Tashalar, and most of the wealthy Calishite expatriates had fled back to their native land.

After Sseth's disappearance in the Year of Dreams (10 DR), infighting among the yuan-ti tribes enabled the enslaved Tashalarans to overthrow their yuan-ti satrap and drive the Se'Sehen tribe from the Tashalar over the next ten years. The resurgent Tashalarans then marched eastward, liberating the Cities of the Seabreeze one by one. In the Year of Purloined Power (34 DR), the Oligarchs of Tashluta proclaimed the Confederation of Tashtan and claimed dominion from the town of Narubel to the Sheir Peninsula, plus all the Shining Sea coastal lands in between. The diverse Lapalians, Calishites, Chultans, and Shaarans dwelling in these areas became known collectively as Tashalans.

For two centuries, the merchants ships of Tashtan plied the warm waters of the Lake of Steam and the Shining Sea, making their owners fat and wealthy. This period of prosperity came to an end during Ergith Klavulgrun's reign as Magister (276 DR to 278 DR), when "the Kingslayer" slaughtered nearly a dozen merchant lords of Tashalaran cities and neighboring realms. The resulting leadership crisis left Tashtan ill-prepared to handle demands from Qysara Shoon V (281 DR to 300 DR) that the Cities of the Seabreeze each garrison a legion of imperial troops. A failed uprising in Untisczer in the Year of Wasteful Pride (285 DR) was all the excuse the qysara needed to initiate the long-planned Tashalar Campaigns.

After destroying Untisczer in a show of imperial might, the qysara's troops quickly installed military governors in every city along the Tashtan coast. The reach of the Shoon Imperium was then extended westward into the savage land of Thindol, which had long been claimed by the barbaric humans of the Thinguth tribe and certain warring tribes of lizardfolk (loosely controlled servitors of the yuan-ti tribes in Serpentes). The Lizard Wars in Thindol marked the end of the Tashalar Campaigns and sharply reduced the number of lizardfolk on the central Chultan Peninsula.

By the death of Qysara Shoon V in the Year of the Late Sun (300 DR), Shoon satraps ruled greater Thindol, the Tashalar, the cities of Lapaliiya, and all the major settlements of the Shaar as far east as the Landrise. A steady stream of tribute flowed west and north to the coffers of Shoonach. Less than a century later, the crumbling of the Imperium under the careless reign of Qysara Shaani (367 DR to 427 DR) left the Shoon satraps all but independent. Of all the Shoon Imperium's southern holdings, only Tashluta remained strictly loyal, largely because the wife of the reigning satrap was Shaani's youngest daughter. Despite the increasingly unstable situation, trade still flowed between the Chultan Peninsula and the heart of the Imperium to the north, thanks in large part to the alliance of the Tethyr- and Calimshan-based Knights of the Shield with a local Tashlutan merchant corporation known as the Rulnadeen.

When the Shoon Imperium fell in the Year of the Corrie Fist (450 DR), a quick death for the reigning viceroy of Tashluta and his haughty Shoon wife marked the Tashalans' return to independence. Backed by the Rulnadeen, the merchants of Tashluta quickly formed a ruling oligarchy to administer the Tashalar and keep the peace. Soon afterward, angered by the Knights' efforts to take over the Rulnadeen (and hence the Tashalar), leaders of the Tashlutan-based faction confronted the Knights and demanded that they sever all ties with one group or the other. Most stayed with the Rulnadeen.

The Tashlutan merchant consortium, which had became known as the Rundeen, then began extorting protection money from ships sailing the Shining Sea. All who resisted were "coincidentally" set upon by pirates from the independent city-state of Narubel, which was secretly financed by the Rundeen. By the Year of the Crawling Vine (502 DR), the Rundeen had established a monopoly on all trade entering or leaving the ports in Calimshan and the Chultan Peninsula, as well as all slave trade along the southern shores of the Shining Sea.

Rundeen-backed rule by the wealthiest merchants of the Tashalar continued for centuries, although the Rage of Wizards briefly threatened the status quo in the Year of the Sword's Oath (1142 DR). In the Year of the Bridle (1349 DR), the Harpers succeeded in killing three Rundeen leaders and fifty lesser agents. This "Treacherous Stab" broke the Rundeen monopoly in Chult and Calimshan but left the organizational heart in Tashluta whole. Today, Rundeen-backed merchant ships still dominate the traffic across the Shining Sea, but the Rundeen's centuries-old monopoly on such shipping and its control of Calishite ports has been shattered.

Eager to regain control of Calimshan's port cities, as well as Lapaliiya and the cities of the Lake of Steam, Rundeen has recently begun to take a more active and visible role in the region's affairs. To that end, the ruling Yrshelem (leaders of the Rundeen) have reforged their old alliance with the Knights of the Shield. In a deal of unprecedented treachery, the Rundeen has also forged a trade pact with the yuan-ti of the Se'Sehen tribe and admitted several yuan-ti into its rank-and-file.

Plots and Rumors

The unstable trade situation in the Tashalar may give rise to a number of adventuring opportunities.

Troubled Scryings: The clergy of the House of the All-Seeing Orb have a long-standing rivalry with the House of Night's Embrace and often work to expose the evil schemes of Talona's priestesses. In recent years, however, the temple's diviners have found hints of a greater danger brewing in the neighboring jungles, so they have been hiring adventurers to investigate. The truth of the matter is that the yuan-ti tribes of Serpentes, led by the Se'Sehen tribe, have recently begun emerging from centuries of somnolence. Spurred by the sighting of Sseth during the Time of Troubles and the subsequent thrashing of the bound and slumbering god, the serpentfolk now seek to reestablish their ancient domain. To that end, they have been infiltrating one city after another on the Chultan Peninsula and taking covert control of their operations.

Thindol

Capitol: Thindar
Population: 1,263,413 (humans 87% [Chultans 55%, Tashalans 45%], gold dwarves 7%, kuo-toa 3%, lizardfolk 2%, yuan-ti 1%)
Government: Council of Cities
Religions: Dwarven pantheon (gold dwarves), Savras, Squamata the Black (Sseth [now Set]), Talona, Ubtao, Umberlee
Imports: Grains, wine, wood.
Exports: Gold, iron, seafood, tropical fruits and vegetables, weapons.
Alignment: LG, LN, N, NE, CE

The Realm of Running Waters encompasses the entire Thindol Basin. Its lands are encircled by the Hazur Mountains to the east and north, the Tching Mountains to the northwest, and the Sanrach Mountains to the west. At the heart of Thindol lies the Thingulph, a large sheltered gulf that is fed by six major rivers and opens onto the Great Sea. The flatlands of Thindol are covered by tall grass and scattered orchards, and the Hazur Mountains contain productive veins of gold and iron sufficient to meet the local need.

Life and Society

The realm of Thindol is rent by divisions along geographic, racial, ethnic, class, and political lines. The northern city of Narubel is all but independent, and the northwestern third of the country is part of Thindol in name only. Lizardfolk are barely tolerated here, and kuo-toa and serpentfolk are killed on sight. The gold dwarves of the Hazur Mountains are considered autonomous, so they are given no say in the governance of the realm as a whole. The human population is divided into two ethnic groups: the Tashalans and the Chultans. The Guthland, as the eastern shore of the Thingulph is known, is poor and backward. Dominated by Chultans, it remains semi-autonomous. The western half of the kingdom is wealthy and dominated by ethnic Tashalans. Each major city gets one vote in the ruling council. Since Tashalans have slim majorities in most of the cities, they effectively rule the realm despite their minority status in the population as a whole.

Mounts are almost unknown in Thindol, so transportation is usually by boat or on foot. Endless battles rage in the Hazur Mountains between the gold dwarves and the kuo-toa, and the yuan-ti continually test Thindol's defenses from within and without. Ophiophobia is rampant among the human inhabitants, and eternal vigilance against the serpentfolk is the cultural norm. Most Chultans appease a handful of dark powers (such as Talona and Umberlee) and nominally venerate Ubtao. The Tashalans hold the same beliefs as their cousins in the Tashalar, but they tend to favor appeasing the dark gods over looking to the church of Savras for answers to life's mysteries.

Major Geographical Features

Thindol's diverse geographical features provide a rich environment for its equally diverse peoples.

Dolsel Gap, The: The jungle-covered peaks of the Dosel Gap divide the higher Guth Mountains from the rest of the Hazur chain. Like the Tashan Gap to the north, this section of the Black Jungles is actually a montane cloud forest, perpetually cloaked in mist. All travelers moving between the Thindol Basin and the Lapal Sea must pass through the Dolsel Gap, since the surrounding mountains are too rough and steep for passage. Thindolese warriors patrol the western end of the gap with unceasing vigilance, turning away anyone who tries to enter their kingdom by this route, and the yuan-ti of the Jennestas tribe keep a similarly careful watch on their end.

In addition to roving troops of gambols^{MM2}, the Dolsel Gap is home to a thirst of crimson deaths^{MM2}. These voracious undead are the tortured spirits of Lapal slaves who were slaughtered many centuries ago in a vile ceremony by the yuan-ti. They now hunt serpentfolk, humans, and other sentient races indiscriminately, although they always attack yuan-ti first should a choice present itself. The defenders of Thindol are well aware of the danger these monsters pose, yet they have left them unmolested as another defense against yuan-ti incursions.

Guth Mountains: The Dolsel Gap separates the southernmost spur of the Hazur Mountains from the rest of the chain. These low, heavily forested peaks are home to colonies of blood apes^{MM2} and clusters of girallons. Legends speak of a City of Apes somewhere amidst these mountains, but no evidence of such a place has ever come to light. (In truth, the only "City of Apes" is Ss'yin'tia'saminass in the Black Jungles.)

Guthland, The: The eastern shores of the Thingulph are known as the Guthland. This term dates back to an era (–1732 DR to –189 DR) when the lizardfolk population of the western Thindol Basin swelled so much that the Thinguth human tribe was forced to withdraw to its easternmost holdings. The Thinguth tribe has now spread across all of Thindol and Samarach, thanks in part to the dictates of the yuan-ti during the heydey of Serpentes, but the Guthland remains their ancestral homeland. In this region, Chultans make up 92% of the total human population.

The Guthland is dotted with scattered hamlets, each surrounded by bountiful orchards of mango, papaya, and pineapple trees. Delselar is the only city of any size, and its inhabitants are much poorer than people living elsewhere in Thindol. The eastern frontier of the Guthland is heavily fortified, and its watchtowers line the foothills of the Hazur and Guth Mountains as well as the western edge of the Dolsel Gap.

River Dolsel: The River Dolsel is the heart of commerce in the Guthland. Originating in the heart of the Dolsel Gap, it eventually drains into the Thingulph. Slow-moving scows transport produce along this wide, peaceful river to the markets in Delselar. From time to time, swimming snakes (both living and undead) emerge from the Black Jungles to prey on the unwary. Local lore correctly attributes their attacks to the yuan-ti.

River Guth: The River Guth marks the northern edge of the Guthland. Arising in the heart of the Hazur Mountains and rushing down to the Thingulph, the River Guth is only navigable a few miles above its terminus. No bridges cross this waterway, and the only ford lies at the point beyond which most boats cannot pass.

The gold dwarves of the Hazur Mountains have carved a steep-pitched cart road along the northern banks of the river, and their mule-pulled carts are a common sight along its length. Dwarven watchposts, carved into cliff faces above the road, guard the entire length of the river. Since the Stout Folk cannot spare enough of their number to keep all the watchposts fully manned, many humans (usually lower-class Chultans from the Guthland) find gainful employment in dwarf-led teams of trail guards.

River Gur: The River Gur bubbles forth from the depths of the eastern Sanrach Mountains, curves near the base of Sormarl Pass, and finally drains into the Thingulph. Before the division of Samarach from Thindol, boat traffic on the River Gur was heavy. Goods of all sorts were ferried upriver to Sormarl Pass, where they were offloaded onto wagons and shipped westward. Today, this river is much quieter, and the small settlements that once lined its northern shore have fallen into disrepair.

River Lundeth: Also known as the Cascades, this very short and wild river arises in the western Hazur Mountains and plummets down to the Thingulph in a series of small waterfalls. Although the inhabitants of Lundeth have tamed the river mouth with a series of watermills, most of the watercourse is the preserve of a pool of fossergrims$^{\text{MM2}}$ and a tumble of galeb duhr. Hierophant Dezelyna Goldeagle (N female Chultan human druid 12/hierophant 5) reportedly makes her home somewhere near the highest cascades to ensure their continuing sanctity.

River Salban: The River Salban originates in a subterranean spring at the heart of the eastern Sanrach Mountains, winds through the depths of the range, and then emerges from a cliff face high above the grasslands of western Thindol to form a towering waterfall known as Salban Falls. The lower reaches of the River Salban are broad and slow, and this section is usually filled with heavily laden scows taking produce from local farms down to the markets in Thindar.

According to legend, a side passage leading away from the main watercourse gives access to the mines of Selgol, and from there to the Firelands beneath the Jungles of Chult. Many have sought this secret path, but none have returned to tell the tale.

River Tching: The River Tching and the River Lundeth are the only two "wild" rivers remaining in the Thindol Basin. These two waterways lack the merchant traffic and bankside settlements of the other Thindolese rivers.

Formed from a confluence of creeks arising in the Tching Mountains, the River Tching drains into the Thingulph between Lundeth and Thindar. The flowing river gives way to stagnant marshes at several points along its length, and its mouth forms a delta several miles across.

The remaining lizardfolk tribes of Thindol lurk along this river's length. Their human neighbors tolerate them as long as they limit their activities to the river's immediate environs, but relations are not cordial. These lizardfolk are in regular, secret contact with the Sseradess tribe of yuan-ti, and they regularly ferry messages and goods between the Thingulph and Narubel on behalf of their serpentine masters.

Tching Mountains: This isolated range in northwestern Thindol rises up between the Hazur and Sanrach Mountains and overlooks the Tashtan Coast. The Tching mountains are largely devoid of wildlife, thanks to the presence of a chaos roc$^{\text{MM2}}$ that lairs atop a windswept peak. This colossal avian preys on nearly anything that moves in the surrounding region and has been known to attack ships that venture too close to shore.

Thingulph, The: At the heart of Thindol lies the Thingulph, a Y-shaped bay. Its shallow, shimmering waters conceal an abundance of sea life. In addition, numerous yuan-ti from the Sseradess tribe make their homes in the depths of West Thingulph, about 10 miles south of Thindar. There they have constructed Khass'insara, a coral fortress that is all but unrecognizable as such, even to those who know it's there. Other yuan-ti dwell in the tunnel known as Labrand's Folly (see above). With increasing frequency, kuo-toa raiders from Gathgoolgapool (see Labrand's Folly) have begun attacking small settlements along the Thingulph's shores as well as lightly manned watercraft on its waters.

Important Sites

Thindol is home to numerous human and gold dwarf settlements, as well as a variety of sites important to the serpentfolk.

Aztul (Large Town, 4,631): This unremarkable fishing town lies at the base of the Guth Mountains. Wealthy Thindolese have been coming here in recent years to mount hunting expeditions for blood apes$^{\text{MM2}}$, since their pelts have become status symbols among the Thindolese elite. More than a few treasure seekers visit Aztul as well, drawn by stories of a "City of Apes" in the depths of the mountain range. Though such stories persist, no evidence has been found that such a city ever existed here.

Delselar (Metropolis, 76,412): Also known as Dolselar in the local vernacular, the City of Succulent Jewels is named for the large volume of delectable fruits that passes through its markets. Delselar is a 3-mile-long, unwalled town that stands on the southern embankment above the River Dosel. Because most of its buildings lie within a stone's throw of the water's edge, countless punts are available for hire to transport residents and visitors from place to place in town.

In recent years, agents of the Jennestas tribe have managed to introduce a wide variety of predatory snakes into the grasslands south of the city while placing a number of variant *sympathy*-like effects within the city to attract them. Increasing numbers of Delselar's inhabitants have fallen victim to attacks by snakes and wereserpents, but all efforts to avert the incursions have failed, primarily because of the city's narrowness and length.

Deltar (Large Town, 2,863): Home to clammers, fisherfolk, and deep sea divers, Deltar is notorious for the large number of submerged islets that lie just offshore. Resident rogues row out with lanterns during storms, deliberately trying to make ships heading for the Thingulph founder. Because of this practice, numerous wrecks dot the local depths. Many still contain lost treasures, since the large number of aquatic monsters that choose to lair in them deters plunderers.

Gurdeth (Large City, 17,991): The City on Stilts is built atop a large island at the mouth of the River Gur. Most of its buildings stand on poles above the ground and are lashed to their neighbors for support against periodic floods. Because of this unusual arrangement, most of the city's roads lie underneath the structures and thus are always dark and shadowy, even during the day.

Like their counterparts in Thindar across the bay, the ruling merchants of Gurdeth are quite wealthy, though much of their wealth was acquired by disreputable means. Those who walk the city's underroads are advised to go armed, and those who dare Gurdeth's Byzantine politics had best expect a dagger in the back.

Lundeth (Large City, 23,791): The City of Whirring Waters lies at the foot of the Cascades, where the River Lundeth has been harnessed to operate a series of small watermills. These devices power all manner of technological contraptions, including a set of presses that can each create up to one hundred swords per day. Despite the involvement of gold dwarf overseers, weapons produced in this fashion are still quite shoddy. Such a weapon commands less than 10% of its normal price, and its break DC is one-half that for a normal specimen. Nevertheless, efforts to refine the process continue. A small number of Lantanna expatriates have recently settled in this city, bringing with them missionary priests of Gond.

Narubel (Small City, 11,301): Nominally the northernmost city of Thindol, the City of Seasnakes lies at the western end of the Tashtan Coast, near the eastern edge of the Jungles of Chult. The city is built into the sea caves that honeycomb the walls of a small natural harbor surrounded by steep cliffs. Narubel claims the territory that stretches from the eastern edge of the Jungles of Chult to the Tching Mountains and from the northern slopes of the Sanrach Mountains to the Shining Sea, although most of that land is unsettled wilderness.

Founded by Tashlutan merchants seeking to plunder the Jungles of Chult in the Year of the Carved Cliffs (29 DR), the City of Seasnakes is now an independent city-state ruled by yuan-ti purebloods of the Sauringar tribe. When the city was in the hands of humans, overland trade flowed north from Thindar to the docks of Narubel, bypassing the dangerous seas around the Jungles of Chult. But the Sauringars, who had been driven out of the Sanrach Basin in the Year of Hounds (293 DR), came to power in Narubel by allying themselves with the spirit nagas of the Chultengar. The nagas deliberately isolated the city from the rest of Thindol by arranging targeted attacks on overland caravans by the pterafolk tribes in their charge. These constant attacks ended all caravan traffic more than a century ago.

Since then, the City of Seasnakes has become the home port for most of the pirate ships that stalk the Shining Sea. All efforts to muster a flotilla against the pirates from the navies of the Tashalar, Lapaliiya, and Calimshan have come to naught, thanks in large part to the whispered words of yuan-ti agents in the courts of those realms and the influence of the Rundeen. In payment for the long-ago service rendered by the pterafolk and their spirit naga leaders, a fraction of every cargo seized by the pirates of Narubel is sent into the Chultengar as tribute.

Psamma (Small Town, 1,936): This river town lies along the southern banks of the River Gur, almost at the midpoint of the triangle formed by the ports of Deltar and Gurdeth and the fortress-town of Samagard.

Aside from its role as the local trading center, Psamma is notable for what lies beneath the streets. Two decades ago, efforts to sink a new well revealed a series of natural caverns that the yuan-ti had used as tombs in ages past. The first explorers brought back a handful of serpentine artifacts, but the town council quickly banned any further exploration. Despite the continuous presence of armed guards blocking entrance to the well shaft, however, a small number of such bibelots continue to surface for sale, suggesting that one or more other connections have been dug in secret.

Samagard (Large Town, 4,106): Built across the River Gur from a small keep that defends the eastern end of Sormarl Pass, Samagard is the only Thindolese settlement in which Samarachan merchants can exchange their wares for coin or bartered goods. Once a great deal of trade flowed through the pass to what was then western Thindol, but today that commerce is a mere fraction of what it once was. Nevertheless, the merchants of Samagard earn a tidy sum supplying their neighbors to the west with trade goods at exorbitant prices.

Unbeknownst to either country, the yuan-ti have successfully inserted several agents high in the ranks of the local trade consortiums. Their primary mission is to learn about both countries' weaknesses by observing what each needs to acquire in trade, but they also work to exacerbate tensions between the two realms in order to prevent them from uniting against their common foe.

Tchinggult (Large Town, 3,413): Once a waystop along the road from Thindar to Narubel along the banks of the River Tching, Tchinggult fell into disrepair when trade along the route declined and a chaos roc^{MM2} began to hunt the area. Today, only human outlaws and small bands of lizardfolk inhabit this ruined town. At least three major gangs and a host of minor ones vie for control of the streets, and warfare between them is a nightly occurrence. During the day, a handful of open-air markets operate after a fashion, offering any and all items that are outlawed in the rest of Thindol for sale. Those who dare visit such bazaars, however, must be well prepared to defend themselves.

Thindar (Metropolis, 98,662): This sprawling, unwalled city was built on the site of a filled-in marsh. The surrounding grasslands and neighboring waters meld together beneath the shimmering sun, resembling one giant, enveloping sea. This phenomenon, combined with its low-lying construction, earned Thindar its nickname—City in the Waves. Dominated by wealthy Thindolese of Tashlutan heritage, Thindar is the main trading center of the Thindol Basin and often the last port of call for ships sailing westward around the Horn of Chult.

Each major storm eats away a little more of the city's port district, and most new construction is on the north side. Thus, most of "Old Thindar" now lies beneath the waves. Although adventurers attempt to plunder the submerged ruins from time to time, most do not return. The majority of such disappearances are attributable to the yuan-ti, who scour the ruins for any advantage they can find in their covert battle to reclaim the Thindol Basin.

Regional History

Once considered part of Mhairshaulk, the central jungles of the areas now claimed by Samarach and Thindol were largely abandoned by the yuan-ti about –24,000 DR, during their centuries-long war with the couatls (see Serpentes, above). For millennia thereafter, the jungles of the central peninsula remained the preserve of savage wildlife and individual serpentfolk (either yuan-ti or couatls) who forged their own short-lived domains.

At the end of the great couatl-led migration of human tribes from the continent far to the southwest in –2809 DR, the central jungles of the Sanrach and Thindol Basins were settled by the Thinguth tribe (see Serpentes, above). Centuries later, the Lapal tribes living alongside the Lapal Sea finally escaped their yuan-ti masters, and the serpentfolk were forced to import tribes of lizardfolk slaves from the Great Swamp of Rethgild to the east. Upon reaching the shores of the Lapal Sea, many of these lizardfolk either escaped or were released into the territory claimed by the Thinguth. This event led to centuries of skirmishing between humans and lizardfolk that eventually reduced both groups to barbaric tribal enclaves.

Over time, the Thinguth were forced to withdraw from their western territories, conceding much of what is now Samarach and western Thindol to the lizardfolk, who later expanded into the Jungles of Chult as well. This division of territory geographically isolated the inhabitants of the Guthland from the rest of the migrant tribes that had settled in the Jungles of Chult. Thus, when the great war broke out between the Tabaxi and Eshowe tribes (–438 DR to –122 DR), the isolated Thinguth of the Guthland were the only Chultans not wholly absorbed into the Tabaxi and ruled from the capitol city of Mezro.

In the Year of Shattered Havens (–289 DR), the Thinguth were enslaved by the yuan-ti of the Sseradess and Sauringar tribes and dispersed across all of greater Thindol, which at that time included lands now claimed by Samarach. Their liberation came in the Year of Hounds (293 DR), when soldiers of the Shoon Empire defeated the lizardfolk tribes that had battled the Thinguth during the Lizard Wars at the tail end of the Tashalar Campaigns. The Sseradess tribe remained untouched in the depths of the Thingulph, and the Sauringar retained their holdings in the depths of the Samarlogh. Without their armies of lizardfolk, however, neither yuan-ti tribe dared continue to rule openly.

In the decades that followed, a succession of Shoon satraps brought civilization to the Thinguth, and many natives found employment denuding the Thindol Basin's of its prized mahogany and teak trees and shipping them back to the heart of the Imperium. During this period, many Tashalans migrated southward from the Tashtan Coast to settle the unclaimed territories west of the Thingulph. They took control of the lumber trade, while the Chultans retained their primacy in the eastern region known as the Guthland.

After the Shoon Imperium collapsed in the Year of the Corrie Fist (450 DR), the Thindolese achieved independence for the first time in centuries, albeit under the subtle influence of the yuan-ti agents who had infiltrated the ruling corridors of power. By chance, in the Year of Many Serpents (605 DR), a minor scandal in Thindol's royal court led to the unmasking of hundreds of yuan-ti infiltrators, including none other than the reigning monarch and his family. All of Thindol descended into near anarchy, and for months after the incident, anyone even suspected of possessing serpentine blood was summarily executed by roving bands of ophiophobes. This civil war ended the monarchy and slaughtered thousands of innocents, but it also greatly reduced the influence of the yuan-ti. By the time it was over, Western Thindol had declared itself the independent realm of Samarach, and all the mountain passes and roads in that new realm had been cloaked in a veil of illusion.

In the centuries since the War of Unmasking (605 DR to 606 DR), a Council of Cities has ruled Thindol and vigilantly guarded its borders against serpentine interlopers, never suspecting that the Sseradess tribe lurks beneath the waters in the heart of the realm. Ophiophobia still results in periodic purges of suspected serpentfolk, although most are now expelled rather than executed. Thindolese merchants make a good living trading with Halruaa, Dambrath, the Tashalar, and (to a much lesser extent) Samarach. However, the century-old decline in cross-peninsula trade from Thindar to Narubel has reduced the flow of coins into the realm's coffers, and Samarach is a part of the realm only in name.

Plots and Rumors

Ophiophobia is still rampant in Thindol, and many rumors circulate about the possible presence of serpentfolk.

Poisoned Waters: In the city of Gurdeth, the Sseradess tribe has been poisoning the city's wells with a diluted version of the potion needed to create tainted ones (initial Fortitude DC 5). This tactic has created a handful of tainted ones and numerous broodguards, most of which have been slain by the local constabulary after briefly running amok. Although some of the tainted ones have already been exposed and executed, a few have escaped detection and are now serving as agents of the yuan-ti.

Other Holdings

The regions listed above include only the most important and powerful holdings of the serpentfolk. Other areas where the reptilian races exert their influence in different ways are detailed below.

Chultengar, The

The Chultengar is the easternmost of the Jungles of Chult. This narrow band of tropical rain forest lies between the Sanrach Mountains and the Luo Peaks (a continuation of the Peaks of Flame stretching eastward toward the town of Narubel).

In addition to scattered tribes of batiri (goblins), roosts of wyverns, and a few bands of wild dwarves, the Chultengar is home to one of the largest settlements of pterafolk in the Jungles of Chult. Those that dwell on the mountain slopes overlooking the Chultengar prefer to hunt in the jungle and on the northern plains of Thindol to the east.

Each pterafolk tribe answers to a spirit naga chieftain. These spirit nagas and others gather annually in a great Conclave of Spirits held in the depths of the Chultengar and led by a trio of ha-nagas. Only the juvenile male bronze dragon named Felgolos and the late Thongameir "Stormspells" Halargoth have ever seen the Conclave of Spirits and survived.

The spirit nagas (and thus, indirectly, the pterafolk) are allied with the Sauringar tribe of Narubel. Small bands of yuan-ti regularly travel between the City of Seasnakes and the Chultengar bearing goods seized by the pirate ships that frequent Narubel's harbor. This tribute is offered as payment to the spirit nagas for their aid in keeping Narubel isolated from the rest of Thindol for the past century.

Ilimar

Like the legendary Shandaular, the ruined city of Ilimar is divided between the two ends of a *portal*. The *portal's* northern terminus lies in the western reaches of the Gulthmere Forest, near the southern shore of the Lake of the Long Arm. This set of ruins is the domain of giant spiders and serpent-bodied lamia nobles descended from the infamous Nessmara, who recovered the *Maguscepter* and reigned as Westgate's queen from 615 DR to 616 DR. The *portal's* southern terminus lies on the eastern slopes of Muaroghal (the East Wall of Halruaa), north of the Great Swamp of Rethild. This portion of the ruined city is ruled by a circle of spirit nagas who are worshiped as gods by the lizardfolk tribes of the Great Swamp.

Millennia ago, Ilimar was founded by a minor clan of sarrukh whose members served as slave procurers for the great empires of Isstosseffifil and Mhairshaulk. Three Ilimari sarrukh who have been in hibernation since before the drow conquest of Dambrath still lie buried amidst the southern ruins. Just as the lizardfolk venerate the nagas as divine beings, the spirit nagas revere the long-buried sarrukh as gods and patiently await their next awakening.

Kethid

The Great Swamp of Rethild pools around the eastern end of Halruaa's Wall, marking the western border of Dambrath. Its borders mark the boundaries of Kethid, a lizardfolk kingdom ruled by King Ghassis (CE male lizard king sorcerer 15), a shrewd, well-traveled leader. Ghassis is unique among the lizardfolk because he has secretly acquired and mastered at least three *Halruaan skyships*, which some claim he has employed to sail amongst the stars.

Under the leadership of his field commander Sladdis (CE male lizardfolk fighter 12), Ghassis dispatches companies of lizardfolk mercenaries, known collectively as the Servants of the Royal Egg, to fight in distant wars. Most recently, the Servants have been active in Tethyr's War of Reclamation and the Jungles of Chult. Members of this company exhibit little initiative but lots of single-minded determination and an intense sense of group identity, so strong leadership is vital in achieving the desired results. Ghassis is rather indifferent about the fate of his Servants, but he is willing to use their talents to his own benefit as long as it is convenient to do so.

Lhesper

The ruins of Lhesper lie along the northern tip of Lake Lhespen in the heart of the Shaar. The town was founded in the Year of the Whispering Stones (–373 DR) by Lapal émigrés fleeing the Empire Plague that had beset Lapaliiya two years before. Lhesper remained independent until the Year of the Wailing Mothers (297 DR), when the imperial armies of Qysara Shoon V marched across the Shaar, conquering all the territory between the Shining Sea and the Landrise.

Although Lhesper regained its independence in 437 DR and again in 451 DR, its freedom did not last long. In the Year of the Fanged Beast (640 DR), Yeenoghu's cult rose to rapid prominence among the gnoll tribes of the Shaar. Lhesper, one of the first towns to bear the cult's wrath, was left in ruins. The few survivors, still ethnically pure Lapal, migrated north to found the town of Shaarmid.

For centuries, the ruins of Lhesper served as hunting grounds for gnoll warriors, but now they are once again inhabited. The latest occupants are members of the Coiled Cabal who are searching for the legendary Emeralds of Merrshaulk, a set of massive gemstones inscribed with the ancient divine spells of Mhairshaulk. The stones were stolen when the Lapal tribes first fled the Lapal Sea to found what would one day become Lapaliiya. In the waning days of the Empire Plague, they were taken to Lhesper for safekeeping, only to be lost when that town was overrun by gnolls.

Whether or not the Coiled Cabal succeeds in locating the Emeralds of Merrshaulk, the strategic location of this base makes the expense of maintaining it more than worth the while. Therefore, the yuan-ti have exerted their power over the human bandit tribes of the region, forcing them to bring any human travelers they capture back to ruined Lhesper for sacrifice to Sseth or transformation into broodguards or tainted ones.

Nagalands, The

The Nagalands encompass the upper reaches of the Nagaflow, the southern half of the Nagawater, the plains of Serpent's Holding, and the Naga Plains. Although the Nagalands lack any sort of formal government, this region is uncontestably the collective domain of the nagas, and no other realm controls this region.

The Nagaflow is a long, lazy river that originates in the heart of the Chondalwood, broadens into a deep, freshwater lake known as the Nagawater upon joining with the Wintercloak River, then drains into the Vilhon Reach in the shadow of Nimpeth. The southern half of the Nagawater is the domain of numerous water nagas and increasing numbers of banelar nagas. The upper reaches of the Nagaflow are the spawning grounds for all the naga subraces. In addition, a Yuan-ti anathema named Phelriss secretly uses the area as a lair. Phelriss is attended by a cult of dark and spirit naga followers who venerate it as a god.

Between the Nagaflow and the River Arran lie the Golden Plains, named for their tall, golden grasses. These plains are home to centaurs, the Talu-min tribe of Lion warriors (Calishite humans), and gnolls. The western edge of the Golden Plains, along the eastern shore of the Nagawater, is known as the Naga Plains. This region is inhabited by guardian nagas who dwell in hollow trees and other hidey-holes, and by spirit nagas who dwell in subterranean caves exposed by the waters of the Nagaflow.

The band of plains between the Nagawater and the Winterwood has been named Serpents' Holding by the Brada-min tribe of Lion warriors (Calishite humans) and the inhabitants of the fortified village of Nagarr. Countless varieties of snakes, including a spitting snake known as the mlarraun, lair in this hilly, rolling terrain.

Two disconcerting rumors have emerged from the Nagalands in recent years. One holds that agents of Teldorn Darkhope of Mintar have rediscovered a means of transforming water nagas into banelar nagas, and that the increasing numbers of the latter subrace in the Nagawater are the results of such magical transformations. The other rumor holds that a dark naga named Calliope, consort of Pristoleph the Purple (LE male Chondathan human wizard 12), has hatched a clutch of dark nagas with arms in the depths of the Chondalwood. Her progeny are said to be growing to maturity even now in the catacombs of Pristal Towers in Innarlith. (In fact, the arms of these nagara are Yuan-ti grafts placed on them by Phelriss.)

Peaks of Flame

Three volcanic peaks rise from the depths of the Jungles of Chult, spewing smoke and ash into the skies. The Peaks of Flame, as these volcanoes are known, are linked via a network of lava tubes to a region of the Underdark known as the Firelands that lies just below the Jungles of Chult. In the heart of the Firelands is the Burning Rift, site of many *portals* to the Elemental Plane of Fire.

Azers, hell hounds, flamesnakes, magmins, salamanders, and other fiery creatures have all migrated to the Firelands via such *portals* and then made their way to the lava-strewn slopes of the Peaks of Flame. Red dragons and pyrohydras are naturally drawn to the range and are commonly encountered here as well. But by far the most numerous inhabitants of both the Peaks of Flame and the Firelands are tribes of firenewts and their giant strider mounts.

Morndin Vertesplendarrorn, the Emerald Crater, is the shattered remnant of a fourth peak, which lies just north and west of the three active volcanoes. The wild dwarf tribes of the region make regular pilgrimages to this truncated cone, which is sacred to Thard Harr. Since its creation in the Year of the Quivering Mountains (77 DR), the Emerald Crater has been home to Esmerandanna, an emerald great wyrm known as the Resplendent Queen and guardian of the most sacred carvings of the dur Authalar.

Legend has it that the Peaks of Flame stand over a pair of doors leading to the Fugue Plain. When the doom of the world approaches, Dendar the Night Serpent (an elder eternal evil that feeds on the unremembered nightmares of all creatures) will break down these doors and escape into Abeir-Toril. The god Ubtao stands guard against that day because if he does not defeat her, the Night Serpent will swallow the sun.

Slitherswamp, The

Located deep beneath the city of Waterdeep, the Slitherswamp is a largely unexplored sublevel between Levels Four and Five of Undermountain. Halaster stocked the Slitherswamp with abductees from Najara in the Year of the Sighing Serpent (1289 DR), and it is still populated primarily by dark nagas, ophidians, and snakes of all sorts. Contact between the Slitherswamp and Najara was not reestablished until the Year of the Serpent (1359 DR), when a dark naga dwelling in Undermountain discovered a *portal.* This particular *portal* linked the Slitherswamp with an area of rolling grasslands in the shadow of the Serpent Hills some 3 miles west of what is now Ithkyxan's Lair (see Najara, above).

More than half of the Slitherswamp's inhabitants vanished via a second *portal* during Halaster's Higharvestide in the Year of the Gauntlet (1369 DR). This group is now imprisoned in the depths of the Nameless Dungeon in the High Forest, and no contact has been made to date.

skullport

The Port of Shadows is a teeming hive of evil that lies deep beneath Waterdeep, on Level Three of Undermountain. In the wretched heart of this subterranean city's mercantile district, among the stone columns of the lower Trade Lanes, a magnificent structure stands out among the nearby homes and taverns. Its walls are carved with images of serpents and scales, and two powerfully muscled, snake-tailed Yuan-ti (CE male halfblood yuan-ti fighter 4) stand guard at its gates. Called the Snake Pit by its wary neighbors, this imposing edifice is the residence of Zstulkk Ssarmn (see page 142), a prominent slaver of the Iron Ring consortium.

Disturbing sounds emanate from within the structure at all hours, and odd, spicy odors leech through its walls. A company of pureblood and halfblood yuan-ti is always on hand to deal with intruders, along with a host of *charmed* Large constrictors, monitor lizards, Large vipers, and other reptiles that patrol the interior corridors. The floors are dotted with concealed pits filled with vipers, and hidden chutes that lead directly to a temple of Sseth below the structure.

In the heart of Zstulkk's mansion, a coiled ramp leads down into the stone below. At its bottom lies a cavern lit with lurid red flame. Magic heats pools of water and causes small geysers to erupt around the cavern floor, making the air steamy. The resulting atmosphere is reminiscent of the southern jungles, though no trees or ferns grow this far underground. From the cavern floor, a small step pyramid rises like a coiled serpent, its stone walls carved with more reptilian imagery. At this temple, Zstulkk Ssarmn leads his Yuan-ti brood in worship of Sseth (now Set), preaching that the Great Snake will lead his people back to the power they held during the height of Mhairshaulk and Serpentes.

This cavern is the terminus of the skull-shaped *portal* in the tail of the Great Petrified Serpent that lies in the Serpent Hills. Travelers emerge from thin air right in front of the entrance to the temple—and right under the watchful eyes of two halfblood guards. The guards greet Yuan-ti visitors from the Serpent Hills formally and invite them to refresh themselves in the warm pools until Zstulkk Ssarmn can meet with them. They swiftly attack any other creature that passes through the *portal,* but they try to take captives rather than kill intruders outright, so that Zstulkk can interrogate the prisoners at his leisure.

A carved snake's head juts out above the temple doorway, and its ruby eyes serve as a scrying mechanism for Zstulkk Ssarmn. A mirror hanging on the wall of his sleeping chamber in the mansion above constantly shows what the snake's gemstone eyes can "see." In this way, he keeps track of all visitors approaching the temple via the *portal.*

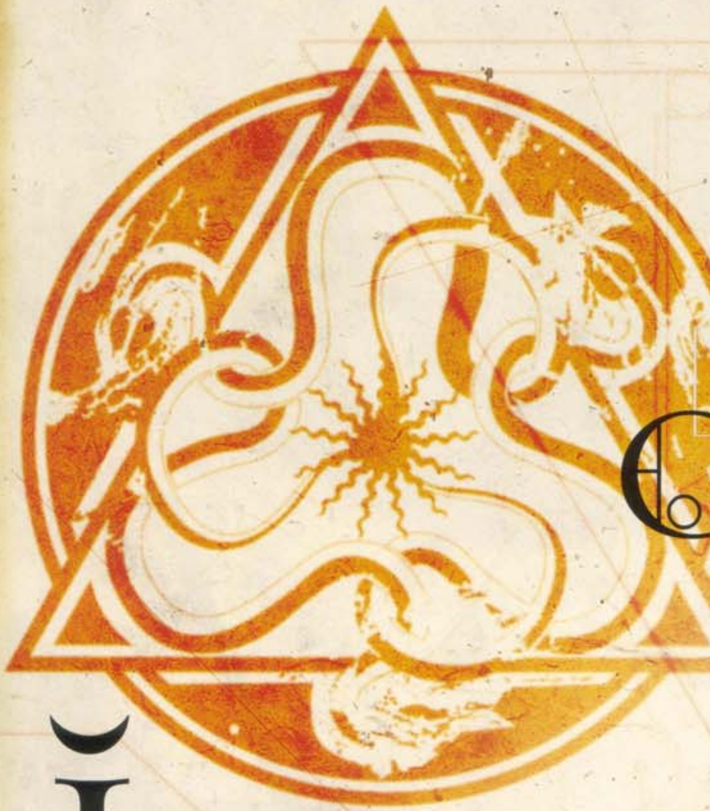
Although his origins and original tribe are unknown, Zstulkk Ssarmn is an important figure in Skullport's thriving slave trade and a founding member of the Iron Ring—a consortium of slavers that keeps the slave business running in the city. The abomination has only recently completed his temple to Sseth, and he is now working hard to increase the numbers of yuan-ti in his employ. Zstulkk encourages his underlings to operate vigorous breeding programs and keeps the resulting eggs safe in the subterranean temple. He also accepts new recruits from the Chultan Peninsula, Najara, and Hlondeth, but he does not allow any Yuan-ti to remain in the city without joining his organization and swearing loyalty to him. So far, the only Yuan-ti to escape from under his thumb is his own nephew and sworn enemy, Nhyris D'Hothek (see page 143), who sometimes frequents the cellars of the Dizzy Drake tavern to plot his revenge. Zstulkk dreams of bringing all of Skullport under Yuan-ti domination and converting the city into a serpentine city-state, with himself as priest-king. In such a manner, he hopes to found not only a city but also a great tribe of his own.

In addition to the yuan-ti who travel to Skullport via the *portal,* Zstulkk Ssarmn happily welcomes pureblood and tainted one spies from Chult who arrive via merchant ships operated by the Rundeen. Zstulkk commands legions of spies throughout Skullport and even in Waterdeep because he has come to realize that information is truly the most valuable commodity in Skullport.

Skullport lies along the subterranean river Sargauth. Over the centuries, several *portals* large enough for entire ships to pass through have been built in the cavern walls along this waterway. One such *portal,* about 400 feet east of Skull Island, is only faintly visible as a scratched outline in the stone. (A successful DC 30 Spot check enables a character to notice it from a ship's deck. A character actively scanning for it can find it with a successful DC 20 Search check.) Triggering the *portal* requires no special key—just extraordinary confidence on the part of the ship's pilot, since the vessel must be steered bow-first into the wall. When the bowsprit makes contact with the *portal,* the vessel and all its contents are transported instantly to the middle of the Lapal Sea.

Illustration by Joel Thomas

Fleeing the Peaks of Flame



Yuan-Ti Campaign

It's certainly possible to construct and run a FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign in which all of the PCs are yuan-ti, and their foes are yuan-ti of rival tribes, Scaleless Ones, and every other sort of creature in Faerûn. This chapter, however, discusses approaches for using the yuan-ti as the main villains in a more typical campaign dominated by human, elf, dwarf, and halfling adventurers.

Making the yuan-ti the main villains doesn't mean that bloodthirsty armies of yuan-ti must slither up to menace PCs upstairs, downstairs, and everywhere else. Rather, it means that Yuan-ti of a particular tribe, cult, or local area can serve admirably as the prime movers of evil in campaign play, even if they stay in the background much of the time.

DMing to a Storyline

The yuan-ti are combat geniuses, but they are also dedicated to the Sacred Way of Sseth. Their approach can be summed up in the advice that one wise old Yuan-ti offered centuries ago to young and eager kin who were about to enter an unfamiliar human city: "Always skulk, strike unseen, and glide softly. Let your targets think of others as their foes, and become their unexpected doom. Manipulate before fighting, and ride unfolding events so that your part in them can escape the notice of humans and others as much as possible. Brutes they may be, but to do things their way is to become as they are. *We* are better than that, and Sseth expects us to show it."

In keeping with the Sacred Way of Sseth, an organized Yuan-ti foe continually recedes from the PCs rather than confronting them directly. PCs menaced by yuan-ti are likely to be framed for bad deeds, and their names may be subtly smeared in whispered rumor campaigns. Their unattended goods may be stolen and their property vandalized. Their servants and mounts may disappear without reason. Almost every useful contact the characters make when buying goods or gathering information vanishes shortly afterward. Yuan-ti "plants" (such as fangs of Sseth in wholly human form) may replace a few of these people, feeding the PCs false information that could well lead them into traps. The majority, however, become unfortunate victims of the yuan-ti and end their days as slaves, sacrifices, or snake food.

As their plots progress, the yuan-ti arrange local shortages of goods and investment opportunities, foster rumors, and otherwise manipulate the characters. Eventually, the manipulations become continual, and the characters live in an increasingly "staged" world that makes them easier and easier for the yuan-ti to manage. Whenever the PCs move on from a community, certain Yuan-ti move with them, using the characters' presence as cover for their own dark deeds.

But the yuan-ti must do much more than react to the adventurers in their midst. As masterminds of evil, they must have their own long-term plan—ideally one hatched by you as the DM before the PCs ever make contact with them. Though the characters may be regular pawns in such a plot, it should not depend entirely on them. This grand plan shouldn't be carved in stone; rather, it should continually alter as the yuan-ti take advantage of changing opportunities—just as adventurers shift their plans to reflect changing situations and new opportunities.

If the PCs manage to uncover some Yuan-ti activities, the introduction of an NPC sage learned in local history could afford the players a chance to discuss what they've learned in character. With the help of the sage, they can speculate as to what the yuan-ti might do next, or how many more dark deeds and slithering influences remain as yet unrevealed in the area. The yuan-ti may well eavesdrop on such a discussion—in fact, the sage himself may be a disguised Yuan-ti. In that case, he should be careful to draw out all PC knowledge and suspicions regarding Yuan-ti plans so that he can judge what manner of threat they pose. Thereafter, the sage is likely to steer the characters into traps or convince them to attack foes of the yuan-ti by intimating that such persons are covert agents of the serpentfolk.

The yuan-ti are masters at spotting other local plotters (such as dopplegangers, agents of the Red Wizards of Thay or the Zhentarim, and cabals of dissatisfied nobles or merchants), and they tend to leave such organizations in place rather than attacking them or frustrating their efforts. The presence of such schemers provides Yuan-ti with masks to hide behind and additional people to manipulate. In fact, the PCs could battle such lesser foes for years without realizing that the yuan-ti stand behind them. As the monk Sathaerus of Candlekeep warned centuries ago: "Remember that there *are* other secret rulers of the world besides old and crazed evil wizards—and some of these are far better schemers."

The Insidious Plot

Though the long-term goal of the yuan-ti is to enslave all other creatures, the vrael olo are taught from birth that this goal cannot be reached in their lifetimes. Thus, success for a Yuan-ti lies in advancing the race's agenda in a way that pleases the tribal elders and Sseth and retiring in luxury.

The Nature of the Plot

Yuan-ti plots always involve gaining power, but they vary in scale. A small-scale plot might involve corrupting a wealthy family or dominating a village in order to draw profits from its businesses and snatch away a few sacrifices for Sseth. A larger plot might require covertly seizing control of a trading coster, not only to skim monetary profits, but also to use its caravans, ships, and traders to move messages and goods around Faerûn to further other Yuan-ti plans. Major goals usually involve ruling a human kingdom, city, port, or market town, preferably from behind the throne, thereby gaining access to all the area's resources.

The yuan-ti see it as only right that all rulers and other formidable individuals (such as powerful wizards and highly-ranked priests) in human societies be the dupes of the vrael olo, and their lesser schemes are usually geared to contribute to such long-term goals. The yuan-ti may arrange the deaths of unbiddable rulers, nobles, or courtiers, take over local slave and drug trades, or even instigate wars between human lands—all to further their secret schemes.

But while some human deaths are often necessary to advance a plan, the destruction of all humans is not part of their ultimate goal. Rather, the yuan-ti view humans as livestock that should be tended carefully, bred, and altered judiciously for the maximum yield. Seizing wealth and power in the short term and slaying others recklessly is the folly of lesser races that are ruled by greed and short-sightedness.

This attitude explains why the yuan-ti never want to rule openly in human society. To do so would make them targets and occupy their time with worries about personal security. They much prefer to control rulers and those close to them through drugs, blackmail, or the advice of disguised purebloods. Openly coercing a human is considered unforgivably clumsy. Rather, controlled humans are kept ignorant of who's really pulling the strings, so that any vengeance they may take simply eliminates other expendable creatures rather than the yuan-ti who are truly to blame.

A typical Yuan-ti plot might unfold in any number of ways, but it always involves many filters between the yuan-ti and their victims. For instance, a blackmail threat to a noble may come from a rival noble, a courtier, or even a rich merchant, who in turn is being blackmailed by another human into making the threat—which he doesn't really mind doing because he hates the target in question or stands to make a tidy profit. The human blackmailing the blackmailer may be a minor mage who's part of a secret society dedicated to the overthrow of those in power. Should anyone trace the plot back to the minor mage, the blame will fall on the secret society because the mage herself believes that a contact within the organization put her up to it. The secret society doesn't actually know anything about this little matter, because the one who issued the order isn't part of the organization at all. Meanwhile, other Yuan-ti are at work manipulating other members of the secret society so that none of them can be absolutely sure that the whole situation *wasn't* a society plot.

Even if the PCs make swift and bloody work of snatching aside the deceptions and charge relentlessly through the web of intrigue, much interesting play can ensue along the way. And further Yuan-ti misdirections at each step are likely to lead adventurers astray, and even cause them to make enemies who have nothing to do with the yuan-ti.

Slithering into a New Area

When entering a new humanoid community, Yuan-ti typically lurk in disguise for some time. During this period, they devote their energies to learning who wields power, who has wealth, how trade functions, where goods flow, and who the important and influential individuals are. Only when they are satisfied that they understand the community well enough to manipulate local creatures and events with precision do they begin their operations.

The yuan-ti typically start by spreading rumors, which accomplishes three main goals. First, it tests the speed and effectiveness of the local grapevine and reveals how much distortion and embellishment occurs along the way. Second, rumors lure local criminal types with whom the vrael olo are interested in dealing to the doorsteps of their agents. And finally, rumors are the first step in shifting local attitudes to favor the trade practices that the yuan-ti intend to establish.

Next, the yuan-ti make contacts with local criminals, either through agents or in disguise, and start working with them. Such joint operations are always conducted in a way that entirely conceals Yuan-ti involvement and allows them to judge the character and resources of their new allies. Once their contact networks are established, the vrael olo gradually begin increasing their influence in shady affairs, perhaps by becoming the best customers of local fences or establishing a network of thugs who slay or beat up others for hire. Soon the yuan-ti have eyes and ears in every tavern, festhall, and other place where criminals gather. At that point, they can extend their influence still more by gaining control of warehouses, hiding-caches, and wagons or ships used in illicit trade.

At the same time, other Yuan-ti agents work to establish themselves locally as successful merchants or nobles relocating from elsewhere. They take pains to become personally acquainted with local rulers, high-ranking priests, and other influential individuals while learning all they can about the affairs of such persons. Once they know the weaknesses of those in power, they secretly loan funds to those who need it, fix problems for those in trouble, and otherwise make the important folk beholden to them.

Those the yuan-ti identify as foes are eliminated in "accidents" or framed for crimes. When a local business is ruined in the course of such operations, a Yuan-ti agent is always on hand to buy out or seize the property of the unfortunate citizen. If winning over a strong-minded individual suits their purposes better than slaying him, the yuan-ti set to work with drugs (see *Lords of Darkness* and *Book of Vile Darkness* for information on drugs).

Once they are established, the yuan-ti begin looking for long-term ways to exploit local resources without drawing too much attention to themselves. The vrael olo are particularly skilled at "milking" communities for decades while keeping their economies and citizens healthy. After all, a happy, flourishing town whose activities enrich everyone (including the yuan-ti) is a much better asset than a dying, fear-ruled community whose resources have been completely drained by greedy overlords. Toward that end, the yuan-ti spirit any troublemakers away into slavery, invest in local businesses, and continually re-evaluate the uses to which their "human farms" can be put.

The yuan-ti also groom and foster the local rumor mill as a means of influencing human behavior. The vrael olo and their agents steer the rumors they have planted to keep the inevitable growth and distortion heading in the desired direction. For example, a rumor about hidden gold in a certain location might be twisted to "many evil folk guard ill-gotten riches hereabouts" or "many folk have died without revealing just where they hid their gold, but it must be close by, and we're only now starting to realize just how much there must be." The second version is appropriate for drawing adventurers, speculators, and other greedy folk, especially if augmented by tales of a few young innocents finding staggering amounts of gold. When newcomers arrive to investigate the rumors, the yuan-ti cull out any uncontrollable evil creatures and use their agents to hire craftworkers and establish trade dealings with merchants they want to keep in the community.

Should the yuan-ti actually wish to shatter a community, they can do so with the greatest of ease. They can taint the water supply, start the right fearful rumors when the bodies start to pile up, ruin businesses, and leave foes isolated in their homes or keeps without food or aid. With the resources they have at their disposal, they can turn a thriving community into a ghost town in a tenday or less. Thereafter, they can use agents to plant rumors that a particular beast or fell organization was responsible for the disaster in order to lure adventurers, priests, or rulers to the location to set things right. When the interlopers arrive, the yuan-ti can capture or slay them with ease.

Into the Open

Adventurers are the exceptional individuals in any campaign, and player satisfaction revolves around accomplishment. Thus, with good planning and a bit of luck, the PCs should be able to uncover a little of what's really going on early in the game. A few interconnected adventures may reveal that Yuan-ti are lurking under their very feet, or behind the walls of a familiar palace, shop, or festhall. Actually coming to grips with their scaly foes, however, should require years of work.

Nevertheless, the time may come when you as DM want an open confrontation between the PCs and the yuan-ti every bit as much as your frustrated players do. But you don't have to be obvious—letting the PCs hear hissing and so that they can just burst in on an enclave of serpentfolk. Instead, you can stage such an event in any number of ways that offer long-term play possibilities and enhance the mystery and intrigue that you've worked so hard to build in your campaign.

PCs in the Middle

Perhaps Yuan-ti from fiercely opposed tribes or organizations (such as the Se'Sehen tribe and the Coiled Cabal, or the Se'Sehen and Eselemas tribes) both move into an area where the PCs are and start to fight each other. If the parties involved hate one another enough, the conflict might rapidly escalate to the level of fighting in the open, regardless of who might see.

All the yuan-ti are likely to view PCs who get caught between the warring forces as either agents of the opposing side or stooges upon whom the open battles can be blamed. ("Those serpentfolk fighting in the streets? They were brought here by the reckless spells of those no-good outlander adventurers! You can never trust folk like that, I warn you! Sooner or later, they always bring trouble, and folk get killed! Killed *dead!*"). Desperate Yuan-ti may try to gain the PCs' aid by offering them deals. Once the characters have been swept into the conflict, agents working for the other side are likely to attack them whenever the time or situation seems favorable. If the PCs survive, Yuan-ti from the side that recruited them may covertly show up, asking them to perform a little mission in return for a certain reward. Such continued contact with the yuan-ti can give the PCs a glimpse of the labyrinthine plots and counterplots that underlie the local community, nearby lands, and all of Faerûn—if they live that long.

Avenging Snakes

Yuan-ti can come into the open for other reasons as well. Though they are ruthless creatures who are notoriously slow to make friends, even among their own kind, their need for love and companionship is no less strong than that of any other intelligent being. Occasionally one Yuan-ti manages to develop a close partnerships with one or more fellow Yuan-ti. More often, however, a vrael olo silently idolizes an older, more successful Yuan-ti (often an elder of her tribe or an aha'ss) from afar.

If such a love-mate or idol is harmed or slain by another Yuan-ti, the furious or grieving survivor is likely to develop a perfect plot for vengeance, then patiently and cold-bloodedly carry it through. But if the perpetrator is a Scaleless One, a vrael olo may give in to her rage, bursting into the open with all the agents, allies, magic, and aid she can muster, intent on slaughtering any creature even remotely connected to the affront. The yuan-ti still isn't likely to attack recklessly, but she may throw away the lives of her agents and allies without hesitation and then wade into battle herself instead of seeking to strike covertly.

Religious Differences

Another cause of open Yuan-ti activity outside of the jungles is the strife between Set and Sseth, which has resulted in an ever-growing restlessness in both the yuan-ti and the sarrukh populations. Some Yuan-ti have been driven to almost human impatience, and many want to lash out at their foes. A few entertain themselves with orgies of hunting and slaughtering slaves in walled "hunting preserves" (country estates), but others may boil up out of the cellars of cities on dark or foggy nights to personally rend a few humans before slithering back into hiding again.

The Old Trick

In keeping with their love of subtlety, Yuan-ti often use "irresistible" tactics—ploys that creatures can't help but react to, even if they have some suspicion about what is going on. As the wizard Vangerdahast, Mage Royal of Cormyr, once said of a favored tactic, "Old and obvious this may be—but the old tricks are old for one inescapable reason—they work."

The particular old trick of which Vangerdahast spoke is a favorite of the yuan-ti. In a land or city-state rife with tension and competing powers, the vrael olo covertly place several agents to support the ruler, and several others to aid his strongest rebels or opponents. Their goal is not to overthrow the ruler, but to flush out malcontents by pushing the rebels into prominence. Those who join their cause while it seems to have a chance of success can then be identified for later removal.

If the ruler truly feels threatened during the crisis, the yuan-ti rush agents forward as timely allies to rescue him, thereby winning his gratitude along with suitable rewards. If the PCs fight on behalf of the ruler, the yuan-ti arrange for them to take orders from their agents. This tactic ensures that the yuan-ti can keep abreast of PC deeds, aims, and attitudes.

If by luck and boldness the rebels actually manage to seize the throne, the yuan-ti still profit because their agents in that group rise to power. However, they try to arrange for the rebels to fail so that those opposed to the ruler can all be swept away at once.

Another example of an irresistible tactic is the spreading of a false plague. They simply introduce drugs that temporarily alter the appearance of human skin into food or water supplies, then buttress the impression of illness with rumors and a few spells. The yuan-ti "inflict" the false sickness on trade rivals or foes who know of their presence, then let fearful neighbors do the shunning, slaying, casting out, or burning of persons and property for them. Many PCs who slaked their blades in Yuan-ti blood have awakened the next day to find their skin green and fearful folk attacking them with crossbows and pitchforks.

Orders of the Faith

Immediately upon becoming active in a new area, the yuan-ti establish a local altar to Sseth. Eventually, such altars become temples, and from time to time both altars and temples acquire new priests. On such occasions, the clergy of Sseth often demand something more of the worshipers than a steady supply of sacrifices and adherence to the Sacred Way of Sseth. Most commonly, the special offering they have in mind is at least one local creature that is not a Yuan-ti (usually a human) who *willingly* converts to the worship of Sseth.

Eventually such a creature must be convinced to worship at the temple, and at some point to willingly engage in Yuan-ti breeding experiments (almost certainly with a creature not of her kind). Care of the utmost quality is always provided in such cases, since Yuan-ti aren't interested in breeding failures or wasting the life of a possible breeder. Nevertheless, the process can easily kill or maim female creatures, thus depriving Sseth of one of his humanoid faithful. Such risks force the yuan-ti to seek additional converts within the humanoid community to ensure that the death of one creature doesn't altogether negate the humanoid worship of the Slitherer Supreme.

Fulfilling such religious dictates may force Yuan-ti to contact humans in ways they otherwise wouldn't, and to befriend or even seduce them rather than seizing them as sacrifices, slaves, or food. When they use such direct tactics, they often try to corrupt an entire family—preferably one of wealth and influence, since such worshipers are considered better offerings to Sseth than members of a poor, backstreet clan. If at all possible, Yuan-ti try to acquire several families of worshipers and keep them apart from (and ignorant of) each other. This tactic ensures that discovery of one group by the authorities doesn't lead to the unmasking of the others.

Many human worshipers of Sseth are used as Yuan-ti agents for years. Eventually, their vrael olo contacts come to regard them as favorite pets, aiding and indulging them whenever possible. Ultimately, a human worshiper of Sseth can become a prized sacrifice—in fact, one who goes willingly to the altar is considered almost as holy as an accomplished and respected Yuan-ti who willingly offers himself.

Snake Companions

Unsurprisingly, snakes are by far the most favored familiars, companion creatures, and pets of yuan-ti. Some individuals even "wear" snakes coiled or draped around their bodies, taking comfort in their company and the feel of scales upon scales. Others use serpents as spies, lookouts, and guardians.

Some snakes, known as the Holies of Sseth, are sanctified in temple rituals. These creatures perform such functions as carrying the bodies of sacrifices to the altars and guarding temple relics and supplies.

The yuan-ti alter some snakes by means of magic and drugs, raising their intelligence until they have enough awareness to become truly evil (usually granting them Intelligence scores of at least 4). Such altered snakes may also grow to tremendous size, advancing to maximum Hit Dice during the treatment. The half-fiend template may be applied as an acquired template to such creatures to reflect their augmented powers.

Familiars

A typical yuan-ti familiar (a fiendish Tiny viper) appears on page 201 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide.* Flying snakes (detailed in *Races of Faerûn*) may also serve powerful Yuan-ti spellcasters as familiars, carrying out tasks such as spying, delivering messages, and snatching small, light items such as herbs and gems. Deathfangs (also described in *Races of Faerûn*) are employed by many tribal elders, anathema cult leaders, and senior Coiled Cabalists as guardians for treasure caches and prized slave storage areas. Necromancers also use them as familiars.

A yuan-ti spellcaster with the Improved Familiar feat (see Chapter 9) can use a jaculi, mlarraun, or whipsnake as a familiar, as well as a spitting crawler, lizard, a muckdweller, a deathfang, or a flying snake. One without that feat may choose a dung snake, reed snake, or sewerm in lieu of a viper.

Yuan-ti have domesticated and trained a great variety of creatures as servitors, salable slaves, hunting companions, and guardians. Several doglike creatures and snake-dog crossbreeds serve the yuan-ti as guards and hunters, most notably the nifern of the *Underdark* (see Chapter 6). The vrael olo are constantly breeding and cross-breeding newly captured creatures to see what results. Canines seem to produce optimal crossbreeds, whereas feline breeding experiments usually fail.

Most yuan-ti breeding experiments produce twisted, helpless creatures of horrible aspect (often with multiple heads) that soon perish, and almost all are sterile. A few of these monsters see service as guardians, and others are unleashed on humanoid communities that have dared to defy the yuan-ti.

Occasionally, when such a nightmare creature proves controllable, it is set up as a god for jaded or gullible city-dwelling humans to worship in underground cults. The yuan-ti can then command believers among the cultists to undertake tasks for their faith.

Secret Organizations

Yuan-ti love to organize cabals and societies, both among their own kind and for the manipulation of lesser beings. Humans are especially drawn to the mystery of such organizations—give humans a secret sign and a password to make them think they're special, and they'll do just about anything! Some secret societies are little more than fronts and misdirections, but others dedicate themselves to particular goals and become political powers in their own right. Chapters 1 and 7 outline many of the more powerful and lasting of these organizations, but every anathema and abomination—and about every fourth or fifth ambitious pureblood—tries to set up at least one such group.

Most yuan-ti secret organizations are controlled by an "inner circle" of six or fewer yuan-ti founders, each of whom recruits up to three members with promises of hefty rewards. Because recruitment is conducted in disguise, the newcomers never know the true identities (or even the true natures) of their superiors.

The second-rank members are then instructed to recruit their own underlings, though never more than three per individual. Their superiors tell them to choose carefully, since they'll be held responsible for their underlings' actions. Spying on and testing recruits is encouraged, and the second-rank members are warned to reward (and scare) their underlings enough to cement loyalty. Any who demonstrate the slightest sign of weakness or treachery must be ruthlessly eliminated. The inner circle then suggests that third-rank members also be encouraged to recruit their own underlings to run in the field, and so forth.

Once recruitment is in full swing, the inner circle begins to spy on members, seeking to learn who is part of the organization for several rungs down. Inner circle members issue false orders from time to time to see whether there are any leaks. Once they are satisfied as to security, the organization sets to work.

Many senior yuan-ti are members of two or three different organizations and inner-circle members of another three or more. They derive much of their pleasure from keeping all their schemes separate and subtly advancing.

Most humans can't conceive of trying to keep so many deceptions going at once. Doing so successfully requires the yuan-ti outlook on life, a bit of luck, a good network of spies, the ability to judge individuals shrewdly—and sometimes, sheer brute force.

Major Yuan-ti NPCs

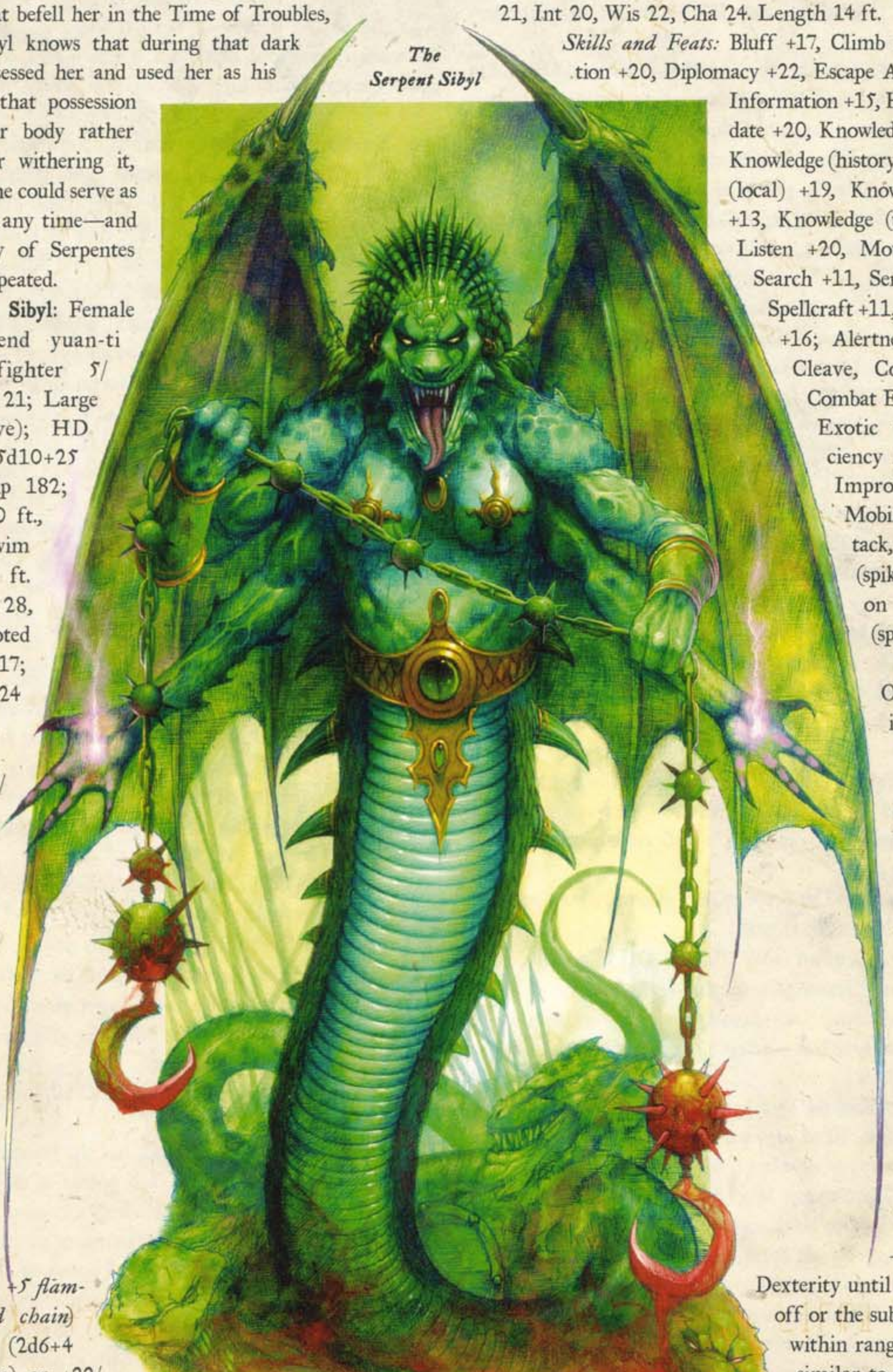
As examples of how powerful the successful leaders of shadowy yuan-ti organizations can be, three yuan-ti bosses are presented below.

THE SERPENT SIBYL

The offspring of a yuan-ti abomination and a marilith demon, the Serpent Sibyl believes herself to be a reincarnation of Sseth, the avatar who ruled Serpentes a thousand years ago. Her followers believe so, too.

Though the Serpent Sibyl is coldly arrogant, cruel, and despotic, she has the ability to inspire her followers—stirring them with glowing descriptions of their ancient empires and spurring them on to regain that lost glory. She also believes wholeheartedly in that vision and imagines herself ruling a new, grander yuan-ti empire for centuries, just as Sseth did.

The presence of Sseth overwhelmed the Serpent Sibyl's mind during the Time of Troubles and left her with imperfect memories of what occurred. She recalls a feeling of great personal might when she looked down on the Pit of Vipers (see Serpentes in Chapter 7) from high above the Lapal Sea, and she also remembers using that power to battle a great-jawed reptile that was afire with divine power. Some yuan-ti have told her that she battled Ubtao, who had taken the form of a great, carnivorous lizard, and she is eager to accept that explanation. But whatever the truth of what befell her in the Time of Troubles, the Serpent Sibyl knows that during that dark time, Sseth possessed her and used her as his avatar. Because that possession strengthened her body rather than rending or withering it, she knows that she could serve as Sseth Reborn at any time—and the past history of Serpentes might well be repeated.



The Serpent Sibyl

Illustration by Wayne England

The Serpent Sibyl: Female unique half-fiend yuan-ti abomination fighter 5/sorcerer 6; CR 21; Large outsider (native); HD 9d8+45 plus 5d10+25 plus 6d4+30; hp 182; Init +9; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); AC 28, touch 15, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +17; Grp +29; Atk +24 melee (1d6+8, claw) or +30 melee (1d8+19/19–20, +5 *flaming keen spiked chain*) or +22 ranged (2d6+5/×3, *+1 composite longbow* [+4 Str bonus]); Full Atk +24 melee (1d6+8, 2 claws) and +19 melee (1d8 +4 plus poison, bite) or +30/+25/+20/+15 melee (1d8+19/19–20, *+5 flaming keen spiked chain*) and +19 melee (2d6+4 plus poison, bite) or +22/+17/+12/+7 ranged (2d6+5/×3, *+1 composite longbow* [+4 Str bonus]); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA *aversion*, constrict 1d6+12, improved grab, poison, *produce acid*, smite good, spell-like abilities; SQ *alternate form*, *chameleon power*, damage reduction 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., *detect poison*, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10, immunity to poison, outsider traits, scent, spell resistance 31; AL NE; SV Fort +14, Ref +14, Will +18; Str 26, Dex 20, Con 21, Int 20, Wis 22, Cha 24. Length 14 ft.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +17, Climb +18, Concentration +20, Diplomacy +22, Escape Artist +8, Gather Information +15, Hide +14, Intimidate +20, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (local) +19, Knowledge (religion) +13, Knowledge (the planes) +14, Listen +20, Move Silently +17, Search +11, Sense Motive +12, Spellcraft +11, Spot +20, Swim +16; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Casting, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (spiked chain), Improved Initiative, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (spiked chain), Weapon Specialization (spiked chain).

***Aversion* (Sp):** One target within 30 feet of the Serpent Sibyl must succeed on a DC 21 Will save or gain an aversion to snakes for 10 minutes. Affected creatures must stay at least 20 feet away from any snake or yuan-ti. A subject unable to move away takes a –4 penalty to Dexterity until the effect wears off or the subject is no longer within range. This ability is similar to *antipathy* as the spell (caster level 16th).

Constrict (Ex): The Serpent Sibyl deals 1d6+12 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the Serpent Sibyl must hit a Large or smaller creature with its bite attack. It can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If it wins the grapple check, it establishes a hold and can constrict.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 19, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

Produce Acid **(Sp):** The Serpent Sibyl exudes acid from her body, dealing 3d6 points of acid damage to the next creature she touches, including a creature hit by her bite attack. If she is grappling, constricting, or pinning a foe when she uses this power, her grasp deals 5d6 points of acid damage.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day, the Serpent Sibyl can make a normal melee attack to deal 20 extra points of damage to a good foe.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*animal trance* (DC 19), *entangle* (DC 18); 3/day—*deeper darkness, neutralize poison* (DC 21), *suggestion* (DC 20); 1/day—*baleful polymorph* (DC 22; into snake form only), *fear* (DC 21). Caster level 10th. Also 3/day—*darkness, poison* (DC 21), *unholy aura* (DC 25); 1/day—*blasphemy* (DC 24), *contagion* (DC 21), *desecrate, destruction* (DC 24), *horrid wilting* (DC 25), *summon monster IX* (fiends only), *unhallow* (DC 22), *unholy blight* (DC 21). Caster level 20th.

Alternate Form **(Sp):** The Serpent Sibyl can assume the form of a Tiny to Large viper (see the Snake entry on page 280 of the *Monster Manual*) as a psionic ability. This ability is similar to a *polymorph* spell (caster level 19th), but she doesn't regain any lost hit points by changing form and can take only viper shapes. The Serpent Sibyl uses her own poison for her bite attack or that of the form she assumes, whichever is more potent.

Chameleon Power **(Sp):** The Serpent Sibyl can psionically change her own coloration and that of her equipment to match the surroundings, gaining a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

Detect Poison **(Sp):** The Serpent Sibyl can use *detect poison* as the spell (caster level 6th) at will.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/8/7/5; save DC 17 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark, detect magic, flare, light, ray of frost, read magic, resistance;* 1st—*cause fear, mage armor, magic missile, true strike;* 2nd—*alter self, Melf's acid arrow;* 3rd—*lightning bolt.*

Possessions: +5 flaming keen spiked chain, +1 composite longbow (+6 Str bonus), 20 *+1 arrows, ring of regeneration, ring of protection +1, bracers of armor +5,* 600 gp.

Description: The Serpent Sibyl has a 14-foot-long, snakelike body covered with thick black scales. Four humanoid arms, also covered in scales, protrude from her body below the neck. She uses two arms for spellcasting and wields a massive spiked chain in the other two. Two great leathery wings, like those of a pterodactyl, sprout from her back near her shoulders. Her eyes glow red with malevolence.

zstulkk ssarmn

Zstulkk Ssarmn hails from the city of Hlondeth, though he isn't related to its ruling Extaminos family. For most of his adult life, he has made his fortune in Skullport in the slave trade.

Even in the cutthroat world of Skullport, Zstulkk is a slaver without peer, and he remains one of the strongest members of the Iron Ring consortium that he helped found. His gangs of halfblood and pureblood yuan-ti thugs and overseers are well known throughout Skullport. These jailers, as they are called, are constantly stalking alleyways in search of easy marks or escorting chained slaves into the city.

Zstulkk Ssarmn: Male yuan-ti abomination cleric of Sseth (Set) 5; CR 12; Large monstrous humanoid; HD 9d8+36 plus 5d8+20; hp 119; Init +7; Spd 30 ft., climb 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 23, touch 13, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +12; Grp +21; Atk +16 melee (2d6+7 plus poison, bite); Full Atk +16 melee (2d6+7 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA *aversion,* constrict 1d6+7, improved grab, poison, *produce acid,* rebuke undead 6/day, spell-like abilities; SQ *alternate form, chameleon power,* darkvision 60 ft., *detect poison,* scent, spell resistance 18; AL NE; SV Fort +11, Ref +10, Will +13; Str 21, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 23, Wis 17, Cha 16. Length 10 ft.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +9, Climb +13, Concentration +21, Diplomacy +18, Gather Information +8, Hide +11, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +20, Knowledge (Skullport local) +21, Knowledge (Waterdeep local) +18, Listen +17, Move Silently +15, Spellcraft +13, Spot +17, Swim +13; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Power Attack.

Aversion **(Sp):** One target within 30 feet of Zstulkk must succeed on a DC 17 Will save or gain an aversion to snakes for 10 minutes. Affected creatures must stay at least 20 feet away from any snake or yuan-ti. A subject unable to move away takes a –4 penalty to Dexterity until the effect wears off or the subject is no longer within range. This ability is similar to *antipathy* as the spell (caster level 16th).

Constrict (Ex): Zstulkk deals 1d6+7 points of damage with a successful grapple check.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, Zstulkk must hit a Large or smaller creature with his bite attack. He can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If he wins the grapple check, he establishes a hold and can constrict.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 18, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

Produce Acid **(Sp):** Zstulkk has the psionic ability to exude acid from his body, dealing 3d6 points of acid damage to the next creature he touches, including a creature hit by his bite attack. If he is grappling, constricting, or pinning a foe when he uses this power, his grasp deals 5d6 points of acid damage.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*animal trance* (DC 15), *entangle* (DC 14); 3/day—*deeper darkness, neutralize poison* (DC 17), *suggestion* (DC 16); 1/day—*baleful polymorph* (DC 18; into snake form only), *fear* (DC 17). Caster level 10th.

***Alternate Form* (Sp)**: Zstulkk can assume the form of a Tiny to Large viper (see the Snake entry on page 280 of the *Monster Manual*) as a psionic ability. This ability is similar to a *polymorph* spell (caster level 19th), but Zstulkk doesn't regain any lost hit points by changing form and can take only viper shapes. Zstulkk uses his own poison for its bite attack or that of the form he assumes, whichever is more potent.

***Chameleon Power* (Sp)**: Zstulkk can psionically change his own coloration and that of his equipment to match the surroundings, gaining a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

***Detect Poison* (Sp)**: Zstulkk can use *detect poison* as the spell (caster level 6th) at will.

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/5/4/3; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic* (2), *light, read magic;* 1st—*cause fear, cure light wounds, divine favor, endure elements, protection from good**; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds, death knell, desecrate**, *hold person;* 3rd—*cure serious wounds, dispel magic, magic circle against good**.

*Domain spell. Domains: Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level), Scalykind (rebuke/command lizards and snakes 6/day).

Possessions: Ioun stones (dusty rose prism, lavender and green ellipsoid), helm of teleportation, eyes of petrification, brooch of shielding, circlet of persuasion.

Description: The master of Skullport's slave trade looks like a 10-foot-long snake with mottled gray and black scales. His handsome human face bears many scars. He has dark hair, and his black eyes usually twinkle with malicious amusement.

Nhyris D'Hothek

A nephew of Zstulkk Ssarmn, Nhyris served as a sullen, lazy, but ruthlessly capable jailer in his uncle's organization. Eventually, he happened upon the powerful artifact known as the *Crown of Horns*, which was imbued with the essence of the fallen god Myrkul. Realizing that it was an object of great power, he wore it for a time.

The crown transformed Nhyris into a lichlike creature. The changes it wrought drove him into an open split with Zstulkk Ssarmn and his organization, and his uncle immediately set about hunting him down.

Zstulkk hired many powerful mages to destroy his nephew, but the young pureblood escaped each time. Eventually, Nhyris was forced to flee into Undermountain and thence into the wider Underdark. From there, he reached the surface world of Faerûn, wherein he has traveled widely.

Somewhere along the way, Nhyris lost the *Crown of Horns*, but he retains the mental and physical changes it wrought upon him. Secretive, brooding, and power-hungry, he is unwilling to accept commands from others but eager to wield power in a far less subtle way than the yuan-ti who follow the Sacred Way of Sseth. Nhyris delights in manipulations, malicious destruction, slave-dealing, and slaughter. He is always eager to seize magic items, and he doesn't hesitate to lurk in tombs, using undead to keep his foes from seeking him.

Nhyris always shifts into snake form and flees when seriously threatened. He would rather take his revenge another day than fight fairly and openly, thereby risking destruction. He delights in forming short-lived organizations of humans and renegade yuan-ti, slaying or framing those who betray him, and treating all underlings as disposable.

Nhyris D'Hothek: Male pureblood yuan-ti fighter 3/horned harbinger 1; CR 7; Medium monstrous humanoid; HD 4d8 plus 3d10 plus 1d8; hp 47; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +7; Grp +9; Atk +9 melee (1d6+3, gore) or +12 melee (1d6+5/18–20, *+2 scimitar*) or +11/+6 ranged (1d8+2/×3, *+2 longbow*); Full Atk +9 melee (1d6+3, gore) or +12/+7 melee (1d6+5/18–20, *+2 scimitar*) or +11/+6 ranged (1d8+2/×3, *+2 longbow*); SA rebuke undead 5/day, spell-like abilities; SQ *alternate form*, bone horns, darkvision 60 ft., death domain, *detect poison*, spell resistance 14; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +9, Will +10; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 11, Int 17, Wis 12, Cha 14. Height 5′ 6″ tall.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +3, Climb +9, Concentration +8, Disguise +8, Hide +7, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (Skullport local) +6, Knowledge (the planes) +11, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +5; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Expertise, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Rebuke Undead (Su): Nhyris can rebuke undead as a 1st-level evil cleric.

Spell-Like Abilities: 1/day—*animal trance* (DC 13), *cause fear* (DC 12), *charm person* (DC 12), *darkness, entangle* (DC 12). Caster level 4th.

***Alternate Form* (Sp)**: Nhyris can assume the form of a Tiny to Large viper as a psionic ability. This ability is similar to a *polymorph* spell (caster level 19th), but Nhyris does not regain any hit points for changing form, and he can assume only viper forms. He loses his gore attack and gains the bite attack of the viper form it assumes.

Bone Horns (Ex): Nhyris has six short, curved horns growing from the top of his skull. These horns grant him a natural gore attack and deal double damage when used as part of a charge.

Death Domain: Nhyris has the granted power of the Death domain (death touch 1/day).

Detect Poison (Sp): Nhyris has the psionic ability to use *detect poison* as the spell (caster level 6th).

Possessions: +2 scimitar, +2 composite longbow (+2 Str bonus), 20 arrows, quiver, *bracers of armor +3, cloak of resistance +2, necklace of fireballs* (Type IV).

Description: Nhyris D'Hothek progressed a significant part of the way toward undeath while the crown was in his possession. His skin has become black, his limbs have grown thin, and his hands and feet have withered into black, bony claws. His red, slitted eyes have gone dull. Six bone horns grow from his skull, and he wears long, cowled robes to conceal his appearance in public. He also employs powerful perfumes to quell the odor of decomposition that wafts from him.

FEATS

Many feats of a serpentine or lizardly nature, including those dealing with expectorating, poisoning, and constricting, are available to Scaled Ones.

Feat Descriptions

Many of the feast described in this chapter belong to the category of monstrous feats. Only creatures with a monstrous form or one or more monstrous abilities meet the prerequisites to select these feats. See *Savage Species* for additional feats of interest.

Barbed Stinger [Monstrous]

Your stinger is unusually difficult to dislodge.

Prerequisite: Sting attack.

Benefit: You gain the improved grab special attack with your sting. If you hit an opponent of any size with your sting attack, you can then attempt to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If you win the grapple check, you establish a hold and deal automatic sting damage (including poison, if applicable) each round that the hold is maintained.

Body Pouch [Monstrous]

You can open a cavity in your body without harm to yourself and use it to carry or conceal items or creatures.

Prerequisite: Scaled One.

Benefit: You can part your scales to reach a hidden, scale-lined, flexible cavity in your body that can accommodate objects or creatures. The pouch can hold a maximum volume equal to that of a creature two or more size categories smaller than yourself, and its maximum weight capacity is one-half your own weight. Opening or closing the pouch requires a move action, and removing an item from it or placing one inside requires another move action. If you adopt a different body shape or size via any ability that allows a change of shape, everything in your body pouch is immediately expelled onto the ground at your feet.

If you carry a sharp-edged or pointed object (unless sheathed, wrapped, or otherwise guarded) in this cavity, you take 2d4 points of damage for each round in which you fall, engage in combat, change shape, or make any other violent movement, or 1d4 points of damage for any round in which you make any other move action.

Placing a living creature inside your pouch requires a successful grapple check if it chooses to resist. Any creature inside your body pouch remains alive and comfortable for up to 24 hours unless you choose to attack it.

You may constrict your pouch as an attack action, dealing 1d4+1 points of damage per round of constriction to each creature or object inside. A creature inside the pouch dies of asphyxiation after being constricted for a number of consecutive rounds equal to 2 per Constitution point it possesses. A creature inside the pouch can cut its way out by using a light slashing or piercing weapon to deal one-quarter of your normal hit point total in damage to the pouch (AC equals your touch AC).

Chameleon Hide [Monstrous]

You can alter the hue of your scales to match the surrounding terrain.

Prerequisite: Scaled One.

Benefit: As a full-round action, you can alter the color of your scales to match your surroundings. Doing so grants you a +2 bonus on Hide checks and a +1 circumstance bonus to Armor Class as long as you do not move from the square.

Special: Any creature that already has a racial bonus on Hide checks stemming from a chameleon-like ability (such as an ophidian) gains no benefits from this feat.

Table 9–1: New Feats

General Feats	**Prerequisites**
Charm Resistance	Racial bonus on saving throws against charm effects
Charm Immunity	Racial bonus on saving throws against charm effects, Charm Resistance
Improved Familiar	Ability to acquire a new familiar, compatible alignment
Petrification Resistance	Racial bonus on saving throws against petrification effects
Petrification Immunity	Racial bonus on saving throws against petrification effects, Petrification Resistance
Item Creation Feat	**Prerequisites**
Graft Yuan-ti Flesh	Yuan-ti, Heal 10 ranks
Monstrous Feats	**Prerequisites**
Barbed Stinger	Sting attack
Body Pouch	Scaled One
Chameleon Hide	Scaled One
Cobra Head	Serpent or serpentfolk
Deadly Poison	Con 19, poison special attack that deals ability damage as secondary damage, Ability Focus (poison)
Deadly Spittle	Spit Venom, spit attack, or spittle attack
Monstrous Feats	**Prerequisites**
Forked Tongue	Serpentfolk
Gape of the Serpent	Swallow whole special attack
Improved Spit	Precise Shot and Spit Venom, spit attack, or spittle attack
Irresistible Gaze	Gaze attack
Piercing Gaze	Int 13, Cha 15, gaze attack, Irresistible Gaze
Multigrab	Str 17, improved grab
Greater Multigrab	Str 19, Dex 15, improved grab, Multigrab
Rending Constriction	Str 19, Dex 15, constrict special attack, improved grab, Greater Multigrab, Multigrab, two or more limbs
Narrowed Gaze	Int 13, gaze attack
Pervasive Gaze	Int 13, gaze attack
Poison Resistance	Poison attack as an extraordinary ability
Poison Immunity	Poison attack as an extraordinary ability, Poison Resistance
Prehensile Tail	Str 13, tail attack, Two-weapon Fighting or Multiweapon
Fighting	
Puff Torso	Serpent or serpentfolk
Spit Venom	Poisonous bite attack
Tail Rattle	Serpent or serpentfolk

Charm Immunity [General]

You are immune to *charm* effects.

Prerequisites: Racial bonus on saving throws against *charm* effects, Charm Resistance.

Benefit: You are immune to all *charm* effects.

Charm Resistance [General]

You can resist *charm* effects better than you otherwise could.

Prerequisite: Racial bonus on saving throws against *charm* effects.

Benefit: You gain a +3 bonus on saving throws against *charm* effects.

Cobra Head [Monstrous]

You can extend the skin of your neck into a cobra hood.

Prerequisite: Serpent or serpentfolk.

Benefit: As a move action, you can dilate the skin on both sides of your neck to form a flat disk, in the manner of a cobra. While you display this "hood," you gain a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks, and the save DC for each of your spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural abilities that causes fear increases by +1. Furthermore, any creature with an Intelligence score of 2 or below perceives you to be one size category larger than you actually are. You can retract your skin and resume your normal appearance as a free action.

Deadly Poison [Monstrous]

Your poison attack deals more damage than normal.

Prerequisites: Con 19, poison special attack that deals ability damage as secondary damage, Ability Focus (poison).

Benefit: Your poison attack has the potential to deal more secondary damage than it otherwise could. If the target of the attack fails the secondary saving throw, the poison deals double its normal secondary damage.

Deadly Spittle [Monstrous]

You can use your spit attack against multiple opponents.

Prerequisites: Spit Venom, spit attack, or spittle attack.

Benefit: You can spray your spit in a 15-foot cone-shaped burst.

Forked Tongue [Monstrous]

You speak with a honeyed voice that bends listeners to your will.

Prerequisites: Serpentfolk.

Benefit: Because of the enticing nature of your voice, you gain a +2 bonus on Bluff checks. Furthermore, the save DC for each of your spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural abilities that creates a *charm* effect through verbal means increases by +1.

Gape of the Serpent [Monstrous]

Like a snake, you can stretch your mouth to an outlandish extent to accommodate immense prey.

Prerequisite: Swallow whole special attack.

Benefit: You can swallow a creature of up to your own size category. Swallowing a creature as big as yourself, however, is a time-consuming process. Once you have established a hold against such a creature, you make a new grapple check as usual, but success indicates only that you have begun to swallow. On the following round, you must make an additional grapple check to complete the swallowing. The held creature can fight or try to break the grapple as normal while you are attempting to swallow it.

Normal: Unless otherwise noted, a creature can swallow opponents up to one size category smaller than itself.

Special: Your gullet can hold one creature of the maximum size. Other maximum numbers of swallowed creatures remain the same.

Graft Yuan-ti Flesh [Item Creation]

You can apply yuan-ti grafts to other living creatures or to yourself.

Prerequisites: Yuan-ti, Heal 10 ranks.

Benefit: You can create yuan-ti grafts (see Yuan-ti Grafts in Chapter 10) and apply them to other living creatures or to yourself. Creating a graft takes one day for each 1,000 gp in its price. To create a graft, you must spend 1/25 of its price in XP and use raw material costing one-half of this price.

Greater Multigrab [Monstrous]

You can grapple enemies effortlessly with your natural weapons.

Prerequisites: Str 19, Dex 15, improved grab special attack, Multigrab.

Benefit: When grappling an opponent with only the part of your body that made the attack, you take no penalty on grapple checks made to maintain the hold.

Normal: Without this feat, a creature takes a –20 penalty (or a –10 penalty with Multigrab) on grapple checks made to maintain a hold with only the part of its body used to make the attack.

Improved Familiar [General]

Refer to the Improved Familiar feat on page 200 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide.* In addition to those choices, the following familiars are available in a Forgotten Realms campaign.

Improved familiars do not grant any special abilities to theri masters other than the Alertness feat, an empathic link, and hte ability to share spells with the familiar.

Familiar	Alignment	Level
Jaculi[SK]	Chaotic evil	5th
Lizard, spitting crawler[For]	Neutral	3rd
Mlarraun[SK]	Neutral	5th
Muckdweller[SK]	Lawful evil	5th
Snake, deathfang[Rac]	Neutral evil	9th
Snake, flying[Rac]	Neutral	3rd
Snake, glacier[SK]	Neutral	3rd
Snake, tree python[SK]	Chaotic evil	3rd
Snake, whipsnake[SK]	Neutral	3rd

Improved Spit [Monstrous]

You can spit farther than normal.

Prerequisites: Precise Shot and Spit Venom, spit attack, or spittle attack.

Benefit: The range of your spit attack doubles.

Special: You may take Improved Spit multiple times. Each time you take the feat, the range of your spit attack increases by an amount equal to its original range.

Irresistible Gaze [Monstrous]

Your gaze attack is more potent than normal.

Prerequisite: Gaze attack.

Benefit: The saving throw DC for your gaze attack increases by +2.

Special: The benefit of this feat stacks with that of the Ability Focus feat (see *Monster Manual*).

Multigrab [Monstrous]

You can grapple enemies more firmly than normal with your natural attacks.

Prerequisites: Str 17, improved grab special attack.

Benefit: When grappling an opponent with the part of your body that made the attack, you take only a –10 penalty on grapple checks made to maintain the hold.

Normal: Without this feat, a creature takes a –20 penalty on grapple checks made to maintain a hold with only the part of its body used to make the attack.

Narrowed Gaze [Monstrous]

Your gaze attack has a limited field of effect.

Prerequisites: Int 13, gaze attack.

Benefit: You may choose to limit your gaze attack to an active gaze. Doing so prevents you from accidentally affecting friends with your gaze.

Normal: A gaze attack functions constantly on all those within range, and it can also be used actively as an attack action.

Pervasive Gaze [Monstrous]

Your gaze attack is more effective than normal.

Prerequisites: Int 13, gaze attack.

Benefit: A creature that averts its eyes has only a 25% chance to avoid the need for a saving throw against your gaze attack.

Normal: A creature that averts its eyes normally has a 50% chance to avoid the need for a saving throw against a gaze attack.

Special: This feat does not affect eye rays, such as those of a beholder.

Petrification Immunity [General]

You are immune to petrification effects.

Prerequisites: Racial bonus on saving throws against petrification effects, Petrification Resistance.

Benefit: You are immune to all petrification effects.

Petrification Resistance [General]

You can resist petrification effects better than you otherwise could.

Prerequisite: Racial bonus on saving throws against petrification effects.

Benefit: You gain a +3 bonus on saving throws against petrification effects.

Piercing Gaze [Monstrous]

Your gaze attack has a greater range than normal.

Prerequisites: Int 13, Cha 15, gaze attack, Irresistible Gaze.

Benefit: Because of the sheer force of your presence, the range of your gaze attack increases by 30 feet.

Poison Immunity [Monstrous]

You can ignore the effects of poison.

Prerequisites: Poison special attack as an extraordinary ability, Poison Resistance.

Benefit: You are immune to all poison attacks.

Poison Resistance [Monstrous]

You can resist poison better than you otherwise could.

Prerequisite: Poison special attack as an extraordinary ability.

Benefit: You gain a +2 bonus on saving throws against poison. If a creature of your own kind produces the poison, this bonus increases to +4, assuming that you are not already immune to the poison of your own kind.

Prehensile Tail [Monstrous]

You can use your tail to manipulate objects.

Prerequisites: Str 13, tail attack, Two-Weapon Fighting or Multiweapon Fighting.

Benefit: You can use your tail as an extra "hand." It can grasp melee weapons and use them in combat, although the normal penalties for using an off-hand weapon apply. If you have two hands, your tail counts as a third hand for the purpose of the Multiweapon Fighting feat and all other feats for which it is a prerequisite.

You can also use your tail to assist with grapple checks and Climb checks. You gain a +2 competence bonus on all such checks.

Puff Torso [Monstrous]

You can puff out your skin to appear larger and more threatening.

Prerequisite: Serpent or serpentfolk.

Benefit: As a move action, you can dilate the skin along your torso in the manner of a puff adder. While your body is thus distended, you gain a +4 bonus on Intimidate checks. You can reduce your body back to its normal size as a free action.

Rending Constriction [Monstrous]

You can pull grappled enemies apart.

Prerequisites: Str 19, Dex 15, constrict special attack, improved grab special attack, Greater Multigrab, Multigrab, two limbs capable of grappling.

Benefit: If you maintain a hold on an opponent with more than one appendage, you can make an additional rend attack in the same round as you constrict. This attack automatically deals double the base damage for your constrict attack, plus 1-1/2 times your Strength bonus. The held creature is automatically released on its next action, so you must reestablish the hold to constrict again.

Spit Venom [Monstrous]

You can spit venom in the manner of a spitting cobra.

Prerequisite: Poisonous bite attack.

Benefit: You can spit your venom up to 30 feet as ranged touch attack. Your poison functions as a contact poison in addition to its usual delivery method. The effects are otherwise the same as if you had delivered it in your normal fashion. This attack requires a standard action.

Tail Rattle [Monstrous]

Your tail gains a rattle like that of a rattlesnake.

Prerequisite: Serpent or serpentfolk.

Benefit: As a free action, you can create an ominous rattling noise by shaking your tail in the manner of a rattlesnake. During any round in which your tail rattle can be heard, you gain a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks, and the save DC for each of your spells, spell-like abilities, and supernatural abilities that has the sonic descriptor increases by +2. You can use this ability even while you are holding a weapon or other item in your tail.

EQUIPMENT

Though many Scaled Ones can use the same equipment as humanoids and other Scaleless Ones, many serpentfolk have developed a variety of equipment, both mundane and magical, of their own design. These items are available in the markets of the various serpent realms, as well as in humanoid cities—if the buyer knows where to look.

Armor

Humans in areas menaced by Scaled Ones have learned to manufacture a variety of special kinds of armor to aid against such foes.

Armor Descriptions

The types of armor found on Table 10–1: Armor are described below (in alphabetical order), along with any special benefits they confer on the wearer.

Chameleon Leather: Made from the hide of an ophidian, this armor is common only in human communities near the Serpent Hills. Serpentfolk who encounter a Scaleless One wearing such armor never begin with an attitude better than unfriendly.

The breastplate and shoulder protectors of a suit of chameleon leather have been stiffened by boiling in oil. The rest of the armor is softer and more flexible. Chameleon leather retains some of the ophidian's color-changing capacity, granting the wearer a +2 circumstance bonus on Hide checks.

All chameleon leather is of masterwork quality, since preserving the hide's chameleonlike properties requires the craftsmanship of a master leatherworker.

Serpentscale Mail: This armor consists of a coat, leggings, gauntlets, and a skirt of tanned snake hide on which the scales have been carefully preserved. Serpentscale mail can be fashioned from the hide of any serpentine creature at least one size category larger than the intended wearer.

All serpentscale mail is of masterwork quality, since the difficulty of its construction requires a master leatherworker.

Thunderhide Armor: Named for the legendary Thunderers (dinosaurs) from which it is normally made, this armor is prepared from multiple layers of tanned reptile hide. Thunderhide armor is relatively supple compared to other types of hide armor. It is favored by druids from the Jungles of Chult, the Lizard Marsh, and the Serpent Hills.

TABLE 10–1: ARMOR

Armor	Cost	Armor Bonus	Maximum Dexterity Bonus	Armor Check Penalty	Arcane Spell Failure Chance	Speed (30 ft.)	Speed (20 ft.)	Weight[1]
Light Armor								
Chameleon leather	360 gp	+2	+6	0	10%	30 ft.	20 ft.	15 lb.
Medium Armor								
Serpentscale mail	800 gp	+5	+4	–3	20%	20 ft.	15 ft.	25 lb.
Thunderhide armor	25 gp	+3	+5	–2	20%	20 ft.	15 ft.	25 lb

[1] Weight figures are for armor sized to fit Medium characters. Armor fitted for Small characters weighs half as much, and armor fitted for Large characters weighs twice as much.

Table 10–2: Exotic Weapons

Exotic Weapons	Cost	Dmg (S)	Dmg (M)	Critical	Range Increment	Weight[1]	Type[2]
One-Handed Melee Weapon							
Tail scythe	118 gp	1d6	2d4	×4	—	10 lb.	Piercing or slashing

[1] Weight figures are for Medium weapons. A Small weapon weighs half as much, and a Large weapon weighs twice as much.

[2] The weapon is either type (player's choice at time of attack).

weapons

Only one new weapon is attributed solely to the Scaled Ones.

weapon description

The weapon detailed on Table 10–2: Exotic Weapons is described below.

Tail Scythe: A tail scythe consists of a long, curved blade that is designed to be strapped to a serpentine tail. In fact, the weapon is usable only by creatures possessing such an appendage, since it does not have a handle that lends itself to a humanoid hand. The design of the tail scythe focuses tremendous force on the sharp point while still allowing devastating slashes with the blade edge.

Because of a tail scythe's shape, you can also use it to make trip attacks. However, if you are tripped during your own trip attempt, you cannot drop the tail scythe to avoid being tripped. Donning or removing a tail scythe takes 1 round with the benefit of hands or assistance, or 3 rounds without.

special substances

The following special substance is prized by Scaled Ones everywhere. It can be made by a character with the Craft (alchemy) skill.

Table 10–3: Special Substances

Item	Cost	Weight	Craft (Alchemy) DC
Bloodflower salve	10 gp	—	20

Bloodflower Salve: Bloodflowers are red-leafed wildflowers with magical properties. Once prevalent on open plains that had been used as battlefields, bloodflowers are now found only in the depths of the Jungles of Chult and the Mhair Jungles.

Bloodflower salve must be rubbed onto the body before damage is taken. Thereafter, it delivers the benefit of a *cure minor wounds* spell when anyone within 25 feet speaks a command word specified during the creation of the salve. Bloodflower salve remains active until the command word is spoken or until washed off with at least a quart of liquid.

poisons

Almost all the serpentfolk and lizardkin use poisons from time to time. These substances vary widely in origin, use, and effect. Many have no effect at all on Scaled Ones, and some (such as osssra oils) even have beneficial effects on members of those races. All, however, are baneful to Scaleless Ones.

Lizardfolk poisons

Though not as brilliant at crafting subtle means of death as the yuan-ti, the lizardfolk have developed the skill to extract various poisons from their environment and render them into forms stable enough to use against foes.

Blue Frog Paste: The otherwise harmless bright blue frogs of the Serpent Hills secrete a unique poison that the lizardfolk of Kalran have learned to harvest. Mixing it with other natural substances produces a highly toxic oil suitable for applying to weapons.

Sleep Poison: The lizardfolk have developed a technique for distilling the extract of several jungle plants to produce a poison that renders enemies unconscious.

Yuan-ti poisons

The yuan-ti normally coat their weapons with either their own poison or that of the vipers they keep as pets and guardians, but a few have also experimented with distilling and combining poisons. Since snake venoms are notoriously unstable when mixed, the result is usually a milky fluid that has no harmful effects beyond mild acidity. Nevertheless, at least two successes have been achieved: sssartisss and ts'ous.

Both of these substances are clear, sticky fluids that develop a hard surface when in contact with air but remain viscous beneath this outer sheen. Thus, they can retain their virulence for decades. Scaled Ones are immune to the effects of both poisons. Those familiar with both can tell them apart by odor when "wet" and by sheen when "dry."

Sssartisss: A distillate of the venoms of several kinds of poisonous serpents, sssartisss has a bitter tang when wet and a scaled or furrowed texture when dry.

Ts'ous: This substance is a mixture of cobra venom and the extracts of several poisonous plants. It smells like overripe fruit when wet and dries clear.

osssra

The creations of yuan-ti spellcasters, osssra oils are mixtures of substances that produce pungent, colorful smoke when burned. Osssra smoke confers benefits on all Scaled Ones but functions as an inhaled poison for all other creatures. In some cases, direct contact with the oil in either ignited or unignited form is necessary to receive the benefit.

TABLE 10—4: POISONS

Poison	Type	Initial Damage	Secondary Damage	Price
Lizardfolk Poisons				
Blue frog paste	Contact DC 19	1d4 Dex	Paralysis 2d6 minutes	500 gp
Sleep poison	Contact DC 17	Unconsciousness 1d3 rounds	Unconsciousness 1d3 hours	300 gp
Yuan-ti Poisons				
Sssartisss	Injury DC 20	Paralysis 2d6 minutes	Unconsciousness 1d4 hours	400 gp
Ts'ous	Injury DC 20	4d4 points of damage	2d4 points of damage	400 gp
Osssra Smoke[1]				
Mixed flaming osssra oils	Inhaled DC 22	1d4 Dex	Unconsciousness 4d4 minutes	Varies
Amasstarte smoke	Inhaled DC 13	Hold person 1d4 rounds	Slow 1d6 rounds	750 gp
Battasss smoke	Inhaled DC 15	1d4 Wis	Sleep 2+1d4 rounds	1,000 gp
Duthlah'hass smoke	Inhaled DC 16	Feeblemind 2d6 minutes	2d4 Dex	2,000 gp
Ektharisss smoke	Inhaled DC 11	1d6 Str	1d4 Str	1,250 gp
Faele smoke	Inhaled DC 17	2d6 Con	1d6 Con	2,500 gp
Hooloond smoke	Inhaled DC 16	1d6 points of damage	Unconsciousness 2d6 minutes	1,500 gp
Jalasss smoke	Inhaled DC 16	1d4 Int	1d6 Int	1,000 gp
Laerisss smoke	Inhaled DC 14	2d4 points of acid damage	2d6 points of damage	300 gp
Ruusstantar smoke	Inhaled DC 18	2d4 points of damage	3d4 points of damage	750 gp
Ulathlasss smoke	Inhaled DC 20	3d6 Str	Paralysis 2d6 minutes	1,500 gp

[1] Only poisonous to Scaleless Ones.

Yuan-ti typically immerse small pieces of firewood in osssra oil for 1d4 days and then burn them to create the smoke. A single vial of oil can treat enough wood to fill a 50-foot-square room with smoke for at least 4 hours. If ignited directly, the smoke fills the same area but lasts only 5 rounds. Once ignited by either method, osssra oil emits a cloud of colored smoke that moves outward from its source as a spread at the rate of 1 foot per round, to a maximum diameter of 60 feet. Osssra smoke is heavily scented, but it does not cause coughing, choking, or any other effect associated with tainted or insufficient air.

Yuan-ti avoid combining different kinds of osssra smoke because their effects negate each other wherever they overlap. Pools of unignited osssra oil don't affect osssra smoke with which they come into contact. Mixing two unignited osssra oils ruins both, resulting in a flammable mixed oil that has no special effects on either reptiles or nonreptiles.

If two different osssra oils are poured together while flaming, the result is a thick, strong-smelling smoke that is toxic to any creature inhaling it. In addition to its poisonous effects (see Table 10–4), this smoke has the effect of a *fog cloud* spell (caster level 10th).

The secrets of making osssra oils are guarded by yuan-ti tribal elders, and most humans know too little about them to distinguish one from another. In large cities or pirate ports where there is little scrutiny from authorities, merchants often sell osssra oils as "cooking oils" or "scents." Some sellers arrange small demonstrations, using slaves or aging pack-beasts as models on which to demonstrate the precise effects of their wares.

Although some osssra effects closely resemble those of spells, they are not magical effects. Thus, they cannot be dispelled or prevented by spell resistance.

Amasstartae: The green smoke produced by this oil is shot through with twinkling silvery metallic flecks that resemble sparks. Its smell is often described as "prickle-nose spicy." Amasstartae oil is produced by combining sap from the leaves of the silverthorn weed with a distillate of crushed and boiled scales from any salt-water fish.

Amasstarte oil grants the benefit of a *cure light wounds* spell to any Scaled One who pours a vial of it into a bath and soaks in the resulting mixture for at least 1 hour. The effects are cumulative for multiple hours.

Battasss: The ruby-red smoke emitted by this oil flickers with random darker "threads" and smells like scorching milk. Battasss oil is made from palm oil and the petals of the tiny white wildflower known as fallen snow.

When inhaled by a Scaled One, battasss smoke produces extreme clarity of mind. During this time, the Scaled One requires no Concentration check to perform any action, regardless of distractions or combinations of effects that might ordinarily impair spellcasting or performance. Furthermore, the affected reptile gains a +5 bonus on Will saves. These effects persist for as long as the Scaled One inhales the smoke and for 3d6 minutes thereafter.

Duthlah'hass: This oil produces a bright amber smoke with a smell similar to that of sizzling seaweed or burnt moss. Humanoids sometimes describe the scent as "fiery" or "nose-clearing."

Duthlah'hass oil is prepared from mint, the bark of certain tropical trees, and the sap of the greater jungle clingvine.

In Scaled Ones, duthlah'hass smoke induces dreamsleep—a deep, relaxed slumber in which they receive visions from their own subconscious minds and occasionally their deities. The effects of *dream* or *suggestion* spells cast upon them by other beings may also manifest during such a sleep. Dreamsleeping Yuan-ti can retrieve memories (such as where or how they hid something long ago, or snatches of overheard conversation) with crystal clarity. A dreamsleeper awakens immediately upon taking damage; otherwise the sleep lasts for 2d4 hours after the initial duthlah'hass contact (regardless of whether or not the smoke is gone).

Ektharisss: The dark purple smoke generated by this oil is highlighted by occasional puffs of a slightly lighter blue color. Its smell is reminiscent of fresh-cut lemons or limes. Ektharisss oil is distilled from the sap of the nightshadow jungle plant, which can be easily recognized by its shield-sized, brilliant purple leaves.

Ektharisss alters the body density of Scaled Ones in contact with its smoke, enabling them to use *levitate* as a spell-like ability at will for as long as they are in contact with the vapors (maximum weight 200 lbs.). Yuan-ti often use this ability to reach high ledges, doors, or openings leading to treasure storage areas. Some also use it to rest, study, or work above the reach of distractions or hostile beings. Extreme care is required, however, since normal weight returns the instant contact with ektharisss smoke is lost, making falls quite likely. As with the spell, the affected creature must be willing to rise, and objects can be lifted only by a Scaled One in contact with the smoke.

Faele: This oil produces a deep blue smoke laced with occasional streamers of bright emerald hue. Its reek is similar to the sickly-sweet "death smell" of rotting human or elf flesh. Faele oil consists of human or elf blood mixed with a distillate of boiled boar brain.

Faele smoke grants a Scaled One a +4 circumstance bonus on all Fortitude saving throws. Furthermore, any hit point damage taken by a Scaled One under its effects is reduced by 1 point per die, or by 1 point per attack if no die roll is involved. These benefits persist for 1d4 hours from initial contact with faele smoke. Continued contact after that period does not extend the effect, nor does any new contact with it renew the benefits until 24 hours have elapsed from the expiration of the previous effect.

Hooloond: This oil generates a yellow-green smoke shot through with momentary jets of red smoke that resemble licks of flame. The scent of hooloond smoke is often likened to the minty smell of fresh-cut jungle vines or melons, though it is much stronger. Hooloond oil contains the blood of a constrictor snake and the venom of a viper.

At least 3 minutes of continuous contact with hooloond smoke heals a Scaled One of 1d4+2 points of damage. An individual can gain this benefit twelve times in swift succession if opportunity permits, but the smoke won't affect that particular reptile again for a full 24 hours after its last healing. Yuan-ti often plan their battles so that they can fight in continuous contact with hooloond smoke (for example, inside a smoke cloud or smoke-filled room). Doing so allows them to receive this healing automatically every 3 minutes.

Jalasss: This oil produces white smoke shot through with short-lived, rainbowlike bands of iridescence. Its smell is like that of burning paint or strongly dyed fabric. Jalasss oil is a distillate of crushed snails and the sap of the launteene—an edible plant native to the wild floral hotlands.

Jalasss smoke instantly and permanently banishes the effects of all enchantment spells from the minds of Scaled Ones in contact with it and makes them immune to such effects for 1d4 hours after contact ceases. Contact with ignited jalasss oil for 1 round maximizes this extension but deals damage as burning oil.

Laerisss: The brown smoke generated by this oil smells like burning olives. Laerisss oil contains certain crushed insects and the roots of several floating swamp plants.

Laerisss smoke causes a quickening of reactions in a Scaled One that manifests as a +2 bonus on all Reflex saves. This effect lasts for 3d6 minutes from initial contact. The same individual cannot be affected again for 1d4 hours, even if it remains in contact with the smoke.

Ruusstantar: The green smoke produced by this oil is shot through with ribbons of purple vapor, and its scent is like that of freshly crushed grapes. Ruusstantar oil contains a distillate of snakeskin and crushed dragon bone.

Any Scaled One in contact with ruusstantar smoke gains 1d12 temporary hit points that last for 1d4 hours. A Scaled One that pours the ignited oil over her body instead gains 2d12 temporary hit points and take no damage from the burning oil. These effects do not stack. Once affected by ruusstantar, a Scaled One can't gain the benefits from either the smoke or the oil again until 2d4 full days have elapsed.

Ulathlasss: The dull, heavy, green smoke generated by this oil flows over floors and then up walls and furnishings as though it were a lazy serpent. Its smell is similar to that of roasting boar. Ulathlasss oil is made from the internal juices of both carrion crawlers and centipedes.

Ulathlasss smoke renders Scaled Ones immune to all effects related to extremes of heat and cold (including natural torpor and natural or magical damage), but not the effects of natural or magical fire and ice, which deal half damage. This benefit lasts for as long as the Scaled One is in contact with the smoke and for 2d6 minutes thereafter.

Contact with ignited ulathlasss oil has the same effects on reptiles as contact with the smoke, except that the user also becomes immune to damage from natural and magical fire and ice, and all benefits persist for 3d6 minutes after contact with the oil ceases. Ulathlasss confers no protection against lightning or any other electricity-based effect in any of its forms.

Magic Items

Many magic items in common use today were once exclusively associated with Scaled Ones. Common and rare examples include *daggers of venom, hands of the mage**, *necklaces of nature's teeth** (constrictor and viper versions), *venomous python rods**, *viper daggers**, and *viper rods.* The following Art-crafted objects are still almost exclusively associated with the Scaled Ones.

*See *Magic of Faerûn.*

weapons

Scaled Ones can make use of a wide variety of magic weapons. A few, however, have developed magic weapons to meet their own particular needs.

Magic Weapon Special Abilities

In addition to an enhancement bonus, a weapon can have one or more special abilities. A weapon with a special ability must have at least a +1 enhancement bonus.

Viper: Upon command, a viper weapon transforms its blade or lash into a viper one size category smaller than the wielder for which it is sized. For example, the blade of a greatsword sized for a Large character temporarily becomes a Medium viper, while the blade of a dagger sized for a Small character temporarily becomes a Tiny viper.

The wielder of a viper weapon uses his own attack bonus or that of the viper, whichever is higher, when making an attack with the transformed weapon. The damage dealt is always equivalent to the base damage for the bite attack of the appropriate kind of viper, plus the weapon's enhancement bonus and any other applicable modifiers. A successful attack also delivers the viper's poison. When thus transformed, viper weapons are always treated as piercing weapons.

This ability can be applied up to three times to a scourge, with each application converting one lash into a viper. When a *viper scourge* is used with an attack action, only one viper can attack; when it is used with a full attack action, all three can attack.

Only bladed weapons (including daggers and swords), scourges (see *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting*), and whips can become viper weapons. (If this special ability is rolled randomly for an inappropriate weapon, reroll.) All weapons with this special ability are emerald-green in hue and covered in scales.

A typical bladed viper weapon is crafted with a ring-pommel that allows the bearer to hang it from a belt, tie it to his wrist for use in mounted combat, or lower it on a cord through trapdoors onto intruders below. (This last usage always employs the viper's attack bonus for attacks.)

Moderate conjuration; CL 6th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *summon monster I* (Small or smaller weapons), *summon monster II* (Medium weapons), or *summon monster III* (Larger or larger weapons); Price +1 bonus.

Specific Weapons

The following specific weapons are usually preconstructed with exactly the qualities described here.

Manyfang Dagger: This *+1 dagger* looks like a normal masterwork dagger, but when it hits, three phantom blades briefly whirl into existence around the main blade, stabbing and slicing the same target, then winking into nothingness again. A *manyfang dagger* thus deals quadruple damage on each successful hit, or quintuple damage on a critical hit.

Moderate evocation; CL 10th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor; *major creation,* Price 32,302 gp; Weight 1 lb.

Scourge of Fangs: Favored by the yuan-ti and drow clerics of Lolth, this *+2 scourge* has a handle made of adamantine and five serpentine constructs as lashes. The snakes are extensions of the wielder's will that hiss and writhe in response to her thoughts and emotions. The weapon deals damage normally, and in addition, at the wielder's mental command, the serpents can attack as separate and independent creatures, using the statistics below. If the wielder chooses to attack only with the snakes, she can substitute her own base attack bonus for that of the snakes in their attacks. The enhancement bonus of the scourge ion already included in the attack bonuses of the snakes in the statistics below.

When a *scourge of fangs* is used with an attack action, only one serpent lash can attack; when it is used with a full attack action, all five can attack. If a good-aligned character tries to wield the scourge, the snakes attack the wielder instead of the intended target.

If a serpent lash is slain, it falls off the whip. The remaining heads continue to function normally until all are destroyed.

Serpent Lash (5): CR 1; Tiny construct; HD 2d10; hp 11; Init +3; Spd 0 ft., AC 17, touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +1; Grp —; Atk +8 melee (1d2–2 plus pain, bite); Full Atk +8 melee (1d2–2 plus pain, bite); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA pain; SQ construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 6, Dex 17, Con –, Int –, Wis 11, Cha 1.

Skills and Feats: Hide +11; Weapon Finesse.

Pain (Su): Anyone hit by a serpent lash's bite attack takes a –4 penalty on attack rolls, skill checks, and ability checks for 2d4 rounds because of the wracking pain its venom produces. A successful DC 11 Fortitude save reduces the penalty to –2.

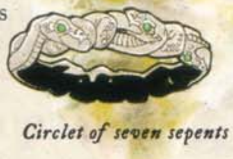
Construct Traits: A serpent lash has immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, necromancy effects, mind-influencing effects (charms, compulsions, phantasms, patterns, and morale effects), and any effect that requires a Fortitude save unless it also works on objects or is harmless. It is not subject to critical hits, nonlethal damage, ability damage, ability drain, fatigue, exhaustion, or energy drain. Cannot heal damage, but can be repaired. Darkvision 60 ft. and low-light vision.

Moderate necromancy and transmutation; CL 11th; Craft Construct, Craft Wondrous Item, *animate objects, bestow curse*; Price 32,000 gp; Weight 5 lb.

Scourge of Tiamat: This *+1 corrosive viper scourge* is favored by the Dark Scaled Ones (high priests of Tiamat) in the city of Unthalass. The weapons date back to the height of Okoth, the ancient sarrukh realm located in what is now southern Mulhorand. Most of the existing *scourges of Tiamat* have been recovered from the scattered remnants of that civilization.

In addition to its normal properties, each viper head of a *scourge of Tiamat* can spit its corrosive venom up to 30 feet as a ranged attack. A target hit by this attack is affected by the poison of the viper and also takes 1d6 points of acid damage for the corrosive special ability (see *Magic of Faerûn* for details of this ability).

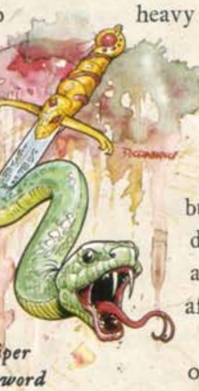
Strong conjuration; CL 17th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Spit Venom, *Melf's acid arrow, storm of vengeance, summon monster II*; Price 60,320 gp.



Circlet of seven sepents

Rings

The image of a snake eating its own tail lends itself well to magic rings, so the serpentfolk are understandably fond of such items.

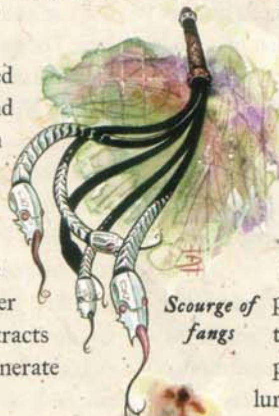


Viper longsword

Ring of the Viper: Fashioned of green serpentine stone, this ring is carved in the shape of a tiny viper biting its own tail. When the wearer makes a successful unarmed attack, the viper releases its tail and automatically bites the same target. The wearer's attack deals 1 extra point of damage and injects venom into the target (injury, Fortitude DC 11, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con).

Moderate conjuration and necromancy; CL 7th; Forge Ring, *poison, summon monster I*; Price 8,000 gp.

Illustration by Dennis Crabapple

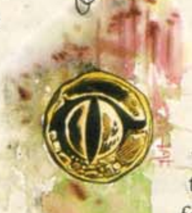


Scourge of fangs

Serpent Ring: Fashioned of plain brass and shaped to resemble an open-mouthed snake wrapped around its own tail to form a band, *serpent rings* are often used as pass tokens by serpentfolk, scalykind, and cultists of Tiamat, Set, Sseth, and Varae. (They are especially common in the Sauringar tribe of the yuan-ti.) Spell wards in temples dedicated to these deities are often keyed to allow passage by the bearer of such rings. An openly displayed *serpent ring* attracts immediate, suspicious attention from those who venerate serpentkind.

The wearer of a *serpent ring* is immune to all serpent venom and gains a +3 bonus on saving throws against poison or acid damage. In addition, a viper weapon never attacks the wearer of a *serpent ring*, whether or not it is openly displayed.

Moderate abjuration and conjuration; CL 7th; Forge Ring, *neutralize poison, protection from energy (acid)*; Price 5,000 gp.



Eye of Sseth

Wondrous Items

The Scaled Ones have created a profusion of wondrous items, but only a few are known outside their realms.

Circlet of Seven Serpents: Fashioned by a bard from a single piece of serpentine stone, a *circlet of seven serpents* is carved to resemble a septet of intertwined snakes, each devouring the tail of another. The serpents' eyes are tiny emeralds, and silver filigree sets off each snake's individual scales. Thought to be originally of Jhaamdathan origin, such *circlets* have been employed by the nagas of the Eastern Heartlands since the founding of Sembia.

A *circlet of seven serpents* reveals its powers to anyone who places it upon her brow. It is considered a headband, hat, or helmet for the purpose of limitations on magic items worn. The wearer of the circlet can use *charm monster* and *true strike* once per day each, and *mage hand* and *open/close* at will (range 25 feet for both).

Moderate enchantment; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item, *charm monster, mage hand, open/close, true strike*; Price 14,400 gp.

Eye of Sseth: This yuan-ti device resembles a thick, heavy gold coin about 2 inches in diameter. One side of it is usually graven with numerals and a device such as a crown, a monarch's head, or the arms or badge of a country. The other side, however, is a jet-black, glossy serpent's eye. When handled by any Scaled One, an *eye of Sseth* has no effect—but any other creature that touches it is immediately dosed with poison (contact, Fortitude DC 20, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con). The poison is gone after one creature handles the coin.

If the last yuan-ti who touched that particular eye of Sseth is still alive, he instantly becomes aware when the *eye* is first handled by a creature other than a Scaled One, even if it is on another plane. Furthermore, he knows the approximate distance and direction to the spot where the handling occurred and receives a mental vision of the specific creature that touched the *eye of Sseth* (but not its companions or surroundings). If an *eye of Sseth* is seized by human adventurers, passed from hand to hand, and then spent in town, the yuan-ti who placed it receives impressions of only the first adventurer who touched it. *Eyes of Sseth* are commonly placed with scatterings of real coins as "warning lures" inside the entrances of yuan-ti temples, to warn the inhabitants of intrusion.

Moderate necromancy; CL 7th; Craft Wondrous Item; *poison*. Price 1,500 gp; Weight 1/10 lb.

Fang Bead: The surface of this small, lusterless black sphere is graven with a pair of fangs. The user can throw it up to 60 feet with no range penalties. If both fangs are touched simultaneously (a free action) just before the bead is hurled, it bursts upon sharp impact, transforming into eight Tiny vipers (see *Monster Manual*) that wriggle to attack the nearest living creatures other than the thrower. The snakes fight until slain or until no living creatures other than the thrower remain within 120 feet of the bead's impact point. Producing the vipers destroys the bead, though it can be thrown or struck any number of times without effect if the fangs aren't triggered.

Faint conjuration; CL 1st; Craft Wondrous Item; *summon monster I*. Price 300 gp.

Major Artifact Descriptions

The following unique items were produced by Scaled Ones of great power for specific purposes.

Marlspire of Najara: When the Hss'tafi tribe was transported to the Forest of Wyrms, its members brought with them one of the few *naga crowns* known to exist in Faerûn. To mark their oath of fealty to Terpenzi, the ha-naga king of Najara, the tribal elders gave him the crown, intending that it should serve as the crown of state. Since that time, the *Marlspire of Najara*, as it came to be known, has passed from one naga king to the next, and today it rests atop the brow of Ebarnaje.

In addition to the standard powers of a *naga crown* (see below), the *Marlspire of Najara* has acquired one additional property: The Guardian of Najara cannot regain its free will so long as this item exists. Moreover, whoever wears the crown can command the current guardian as if he or she were its creator.

Strong enchantment; CL 15th; Weight —.

Naga Crown: These powerful items were actually created by the yuan-ti; *naga crown* is merely a popular name. Each *naga crown* is a silvery metal circlet with three points or spines. It reveals its powers to the wearer as soon as it is placed on the head.

The wearer can use *see invisibility* at will. With the proper command word, he can create a *repulsion* or *spell turning* effect. Furthermore, the wearer's daily allotment of arcane spells doubles for all spell levels. (This benefit does not stack with that of a *ring of wizardry* or any other effect that grants extra arcane spells.)

Once per day, the wearer can dominate all Scaled Ones with Intelligence scores of 2 or below within a 1,500-foot radius for 1 hour. This ability otherwise functions like the *dominate monster* spell. The wearer can issue telepathic commands to all controlled creatures in the area or to any single creature or group within range and line of sight.

No Scaled One with an Intelligence score of 2 or below can directly attack the wearer, even if attacked by the wearer or controlled by another *naga crown*. Scaled Ones already under the wearer's control cannot be affected by another *charm* or compulsion effect, even from another *naga crown*. A Scaled One with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher can attack the wearer, but it takes a −3 morale penalty on attack rolls.

Strong enchantment; CL 15th; Weight —.

Naja Fountain: The *Naja Fountain* lies in the depths of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun in the Shrine of Cowled Serpents, near the main altar to Ssharstrune. Its large pool is encircled by the carved statue of an amphisbaena with both pairs of jaws interlocked. Small snake statuettes rear up from the heart of the pool, spitting streams of water into the air. For millennia, the Naja Fountain was the lair of the ha-naga Terpenzi, but it has lain untended since the Year of Moor Birds (90 DR).

The effective arcane caster level of anyone who bathes in the *Naja Fountain* permanently increases by +3. This benefit can be gained only once per creature. Furthermore, immersion in the fountain's waters confers the benefits of a *heal* spell for every round of immersion. Finally, any living creature in contact with the fountain's water is immortal and does not age, though these benefits are lost if the creature ceases contact with the water. The water loses all magical powers when removed from the fountain.

Overwhelming conjuration; CL 21st; Weight: N/A (immovable).

Yuan-ti Grafts

Yuan-ti grafts are serpentine body parts that can be attached to the body of another corporeal creature.

Acquiring a Yuan-ti Graft

Since the monstrously powerful Yuan-ti anathemas can create Yuan-ti grafts quickly, they are the primary users of such magic. Other Yuan-ti that work closely with humanoid agents or cultists often learn the Graft Yuan-ti Flesh feat so that they can enhance their minions with grafts.

Added Tail: An added tail extends from the recipient's tailbone rather than replacing its legs, granting it a natural swim speed equal to one-half its land speed. Like any creature with a natural swim speed, the grafted creature need not make Swim checks to move at its swim speed underwater and gains a +8 racial bonus on Swim checks made to perform some special action or avoid a hazard. The grafted creature can always chose to take 10 on a Swim check, even if rushed or threatened when swimming, and it can use the run action while swimming if it swims in a straight line. The grafted creature also gains a +4 racial bonus on Balance checks and can constrict creatures one or more size categories smaller than itself, dealing 1d4 points of bludgeoning damage plus 1-1/2 times its Strength bonus on a successful grapple check.

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Graft Yuan-ti Flesh; Price 6,000 gp.

Poison Fangs: These long, sharp fangs allow the grafted creature to deliver poison (injury, Fortitude DC 10 + 1/2 grafted creature's character level + grafted creature's Con modifier, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con) with a successful bite attack. A grafted creature that did not previously have a bite attack can bite only a helpless opponent or a grappled foe (delivering the poison with a successful grapple check to pin the creature).

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Graft Yuan-ti Flesh; Price 8,000 gp.

Replacement Tail: This graft replaces the recipient's legs or rear limbs. The grafted creature's land speed is reduced by 10 feet, but it can climb and swim at one-half its original land speed. The creature can constrict creatures of its own size category or smaller, dealing 1d4 points of bludgeoning damage plus 1-1/2 times its Strength bonus on a successful grapple check.

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Graft Yuan-ti Flesh; Price 12,000 gp.

Scaly Skin: This piece of yuan-ti skin improves the grafted creature's natural armor bonus by +3.

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Graft Yuan-ti Flesh; Price 36,000 gp.

Serpent Arm: This long, flexible arm ends in a snake head. The grafted creature can make one bite attack with the arm, dealing 1d4 points of damage plus poison (injury, Fortitude DC 10 + 1/2 grafted creature's character level + grafted creature's Con modifier, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con).

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Graft Yuan-ti Flesh; Price 12,000 gp.

SPELLS

Many spells in common use today were once exclusively associated with serpentfolk or scalykind. Examples include *blinding spittle*$^{\text{PGtF}}$, *greater mage hand*$^{\text{MoF}}$, *greater magic fang*, *gutsnake*$^{\text{MoF}}$, *mage hand*, *magic fang*, many jaws$^{\text{PGtF}}$, *poison*, *snakebite*$^{\text{MoF}}$, and *vipergout*$^{\text{PGtF}}$. The following spells are still exclusively (or nearly so) associated with the Scaled Ones.

Ability Rip

Transmutation
Level: Sorcerer/wizard 7
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Touch
Targets: Two living creatures
Duration: 1 hour/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (see text)
Spell Resistance: Yes

You rip a supernatural ability of your choice away from one creature and transfer it to another. The two creatures must be within 30 feet of each other and remain conscious throughout the casting of the spell. In exchange for this new ability, the recipient permanently loses a supernatural ability it already possesses. If it has none to exchange, it instead loses two class levels (or 2 Hit Dice if it has no class levels).

Class features cannot be transferred by means of this spell. The spell fails if used to transfer an ability to a creature that lacks the proper body parts, size, or other criterion for its use, or if the target creature has fewer than 2 Hit Dice and no supernatural abilities to trade. Either subject may negate the transfer with a successful Fortitude save.

Material Component: A caterpillar in a cocoon.

Erupt

Transmutation [Fire]
Level: Cleric 9
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: Touch
Area: Burst with a radius of 100 ft./level
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Fortitude half
Spell Resistance: Yes

You draw molten lava up through the ground. Every creature within the area that fails a Fortitude saving throw takes 10 points of fire damage per caster level and catches on fire (see Catching on Fire, page 303 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Furthermore, anyone wearing metal armor who fails the saving throw is also affected as though by a *heat metal* spell. A successful saving throw negates the *heat metal* effect and halves the damage. Structures and unattended objects automatically take full damage (no save). *Erupt* leaves its entire area a blackened ruin incapable of supporting plant or animal life for a full year.

Fang Trap

Abjuration
Level: Cleric 4, sorcerer/wizard 4
Components: V, S, DF/M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target or Area: Object touched or area up to 5 sq. ft./level
Duration: Permanent until discharged (D)
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (see text)
Spell Resistance: Yes

While casting this spell, you physically trace the area or handle the object to be trapped. A *fang trap* functions like a *glyph of warding*, except that it can't be made to activate on the basis of faith or alignment, and you can't be caught in your own *fang trap*.

A *fang trap* is usually cast on a specific spot, such as a doorway or an area of floor. It can be set to distinguish between humans and Scaled Ones, or between beings wearing particular items and those who are not. The trigger can't be a symbol, but it may be one or more specific items (for example, "six metal rings on digits, no more and no less").

When a *fang trap* discharges, the subject is held immobile for 1 round. A successful Fortitude saving throw frees the subject after that period without further effect. A failed save means the subject takes 1d4 points of piercing and bludgeoning damage per caster level from the bite of a pair of unseen jaws.

Material Component: A fang from any snake.

Handfang

Transmutation
Level: Cleric 3, sorcerer/wizard 3
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round/level

You create a fanged, biting mouth in the palm of your hand. When you lay your hand upon a creature by making a touch attack, the mouth deals 1d8 points of damage.

If you scored a crtical hit with your touch attack, you may start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. If you establish a hold, the fanged mouth sinks its teeth into the target's flesh and continues to bite for an additional 1d6 points of damage each round until the hold is broken or the spell ends.

Laogzed's Breath

Level: Cleric 3, sorcerer/wizard 3
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Area: Cone
Duration: Instantaneous

As *stinking cloud*, except that the nauseating vapors persist for 10 rounds.

Lava Missile

Conjuration (Creation) [Fire]
Level: Cleric 2, druid 2
Components: V, S, DF
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft./level)
Targets: Up to five creatures, no two of which can be more than 15 ft. apart.
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflex half
Spell Resistance: No

A missile of lava darts forth from your fingertip and strikes its target, dealing 1d4 points of fire damage. The missile strikes unerringly if the target has less than total cover or concealment. Specific parts of a creature can't be singled out. A target that fails its saving throw catches on fire (see Catching on Fire in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

For every two caster levels, you gain an additional missile—two at 4th level, three at 6th level, four at 8th level, and the maximum of five at 10th level or higher. If you shoot multiple missiles, you can have them strike a single creature or several creatures. A single missile can strike only one creature. You must designate targets before you check for spell resistance or roll damage.

A *lava missile* cures firenewts of 1d4 points of damage. This spell was first used by firenewt clerics of Kossuth.

Lava Splash

Conjuration (Creation) [Fire]
Level: Cleric 5, druid 4
Components: V, S, DF, F
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Area: Cylinder (20-foot radius, 20 feet high)
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflex half
Spell Resistance: No

This spell creates a wave of lava that rises up and showers the designated area. Each creature in the area takes 1d4 points of fire damage per caster level (maximum 15d6).

Lava splash acts as a *cure moderate wounds* spell to firenewts. This spell was first used by firenewt clerics of Kossuth.

Focus: A fist-sized lump of volcanic rock.

RAZORSCALES

Transmutation
Level: Cleric 2, druid 2, ranger 2, sorcerer/wizard 2
Components: V, DF/M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Personal
Target: You
Duration: 1 round/level (D)

Your scales become razor-sharp. While this spell is in effect, you deal lethal instead of nonlethal damage when grappling.

If are not a Scaled One, this spell automatically fails.

Material Component: A thin-bladed razor.

SCENT

Transmutation
Level: Druid 2, ranger 2, sorcerer/wizard 2
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 10 min./level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

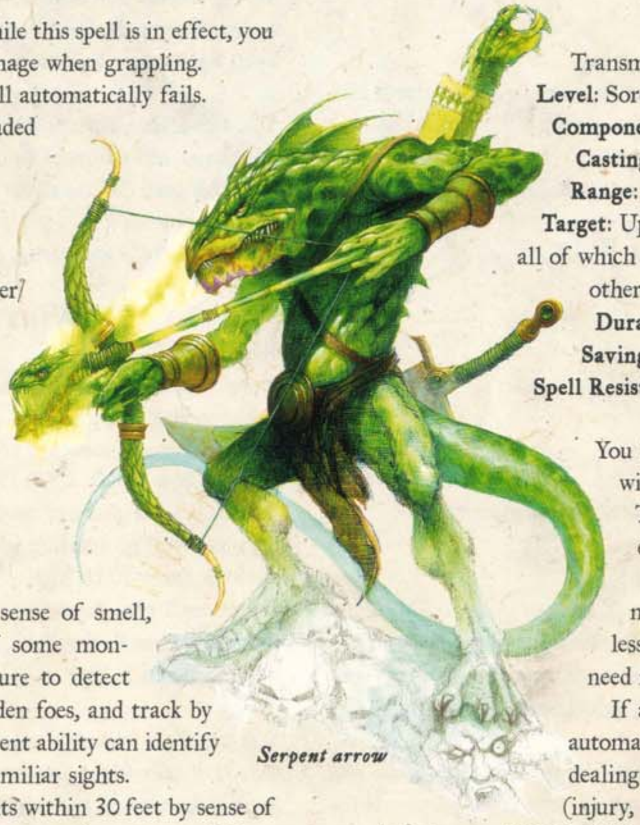
You give the target an enhanced sense of smell, equivalent to the scent ability of some monsters. This ability allows the creature to detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell. Creatures with the scent ability can identify familiar odors just as humans do familiar sights.

The creature can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell. If the opponent is upwind, the range increases to 60 feet; if downwind, it drops to 15 feet. Strong scents, such as smoke or rotting garbage, can be detected at twice the ranges noted above. Overpowering scents, such as skunk musk or troglodyte stench, can be detected at triple normal range.

When a creature detects a scent, the exact location is not revealed—only its presence somewhere within range. The creature can take a partial action to note the direction of the scent. If it moves within 5 feet of the source, the creature can pinpoint that source.

A creature with the scent ability can follow tracks by smell, making a Wisdom check to find or follow a track. The typical DC for a fresh trail is 10 (no matter what kind of surface holds the scent). This DC increases or decreases depending on the strength of the quarry's odor, the number of creatures, and the age of the trail. For each hour that the trail is cold, the DC increases by 2. The ability otherwise follows the rules for the Track feat. Creatures tracking by scent ignore the effects of surface conditions and poor visibility.

Arcane material Components: A sprinkle of mustard and pepper, and a drop of sweat.



Serpent arrow

Illustration by Wayne England

SERPENT ARROW

Transmutation
Level: Sorcerer/wizard 4
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: Up to eight wooden projectiles, all of which must be in contact with each other at the time of casting
Duration: 10 min./level
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

You imbue wooden arrows or darts with the potential to turn into Tiny vipers (see the Snake entry, page 280 of the *Monster Manual* for statistics). These missiles remain rigid and harmless until fired or hurled. They need not be used by the caster.

If a *serpent arrow* hits, the snake automatically bites the target creature, dealing 1 point of damage plus poison (injury, Fortitude DC 11, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con). The missile remains in snake form for the remaining duration of the spell, attacking their original opponents to the best of their ability, continuing to bite it even if the target dies. If the *serpent arrow* misses its target or the designated opponent moves outside of the snake's ability to attack (such as via flying or teleportation), the creature attacks the nearest opponent. If you can communicate with the viper, you can direct it to attack particular enemies. When the duration of the spell expires, any focus that became a viper melts away, leaving nothing behind. Focuses that did not turn into *serpent arrows* retain their natural form.

Material Component: A scale from any sort of snake.

TRAIT REMOVAL

Transmutation
Level: Sorcerer/wizard 5
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 hour
Range: Touch
Target: One touched living creature
Duration: 1 hour/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

You temporarily remove one extraordinary or supernatural ability of your choice from the target creature. This spell does not work on constructs, oozes, or undead.

Material Component: A pinch of ash.

VENOM BOLT

Evocation [Acid]
Level: Cleric 4, sorcerer/wizard 4
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: 100 ft.
Area: 100-ft. line
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: Reflex half, Fortitude partial (see text)
Spell Resistance: Yes

You release a beam of fell energy from your eye, mouth, fingertip, or tail tip that travels in a straight line. Every creature in its path takes 2d8 points of acid damage, though the beam is not actually composed of any acidic substance. A successful Reflex save halves this damage.

Furthermore, every creature in the path of the *venom bolt* must also make a successful Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds. Success means the subject is *slowed* for 1 round. Creatures do not block the beam, but walls and other solid barriers do.

Yuan-ti and their creations (such as tainted ones and broodguards) are immune to the effects of this spell, as are creatures with the Snake Blood feat (see Feats in *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*). Other Scaled Ones are immune to the paralysis effect and need not save against it.

Material Component: A drop of venom from any sort of poisonous snake.

VENOMFIRE

Transmutation [Acid]
Level: Cleric 3, druid 3, ranger 4
Components: V, M
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 hour/level
Saving Throw: Fortitude negates (harmless)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

You cause the subject's venom to become caustic, dealing an additional 1d6 points of acid damage per caster level with each use. This spell has no effect on creatures that do not naturally produce poison.

Material Component: A drop of acid.

WHIRL OF FANGS

Evocation [Force]
Level: Cleric 6, sorcerer/wizard 7
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 standard action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Effect: Wall or plane of darting jaws up to 20 ft. long/level, or a ringed wall of whirling jaws with a radius up to 5 ft./2 levels; either form 20 ft. high
Duration: 1 min./level (D)
Saving Throw: Reflex half
Spell Resistance: Yes

You create an immobile curtain of snapping, serpent-fanged jaws shaped of pure force. You can choose to orient this barrier at any angle from vertical to horizontal at the time of casting. The force jaws race to bite at any creature other than you that comes into contact with them. Any creature passing through the curtain takes 12d4 points of damage, with a Reflex save for half damage.

If you evoke the barrier so that it appears where creatures are, each creature takes damage as if passing through the curtain. Each such creature can avoid the wall (ending up on the side of its choice, where feasible) and thus take no damage by making a successful Reflex save. A successful Reflex save means the creature has reached either side of the wall without taking any damage.

A creature inside a *whirl of fangs* takes 2d4 points of damage (Reflex save for half) on its turn each round that it remains in contact with the effect. You can move through or remain within your own *whirl of fangs* without taking damage. Accordingly, many Yuan-ti spellcasters "wear" this spell as a sort of immobile cloak when fighting formidable foes.

PRESTIGE CLASSES

Scaled Ones have access to a number of prestige classes that take advantage of their unique abilities. The following prestige classes are specific to certain races of Scaled Ones, or to those who hunt such creatures.

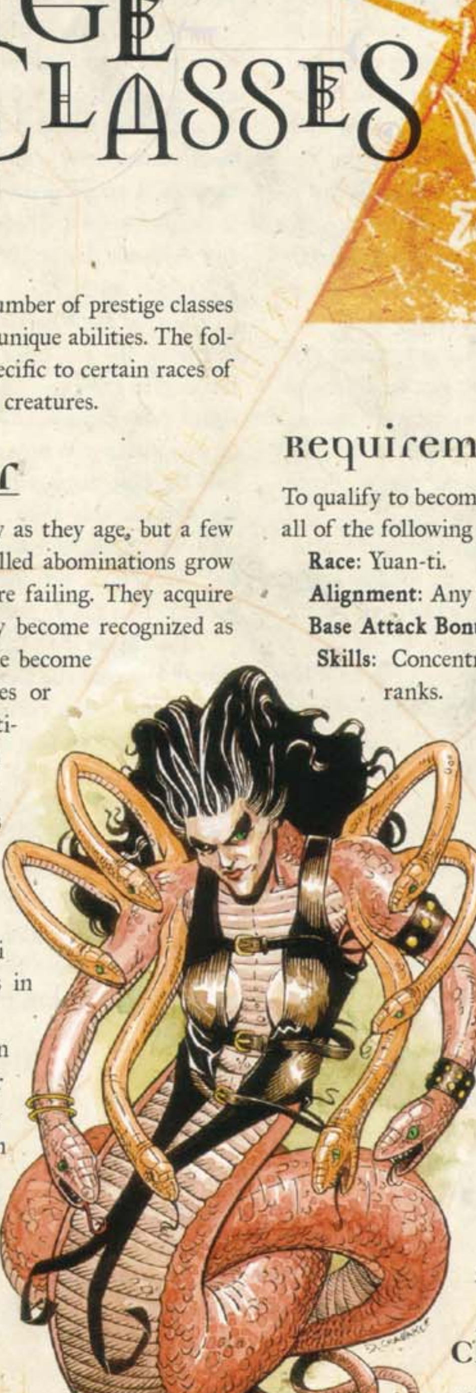
Illustration by Dennis Crabapple

Ancient Master

Most Yuan-ti grow forgetful and sleepy as they age, but a few of the most powerful and strongest-willed abominations grow mightier of mind while their bodies are failing. They acquire additional psionic powers and gradually become recognized as the "ancient masters" of the race. Some become religious zealots, founding new temples or taking over existing ones and fanatically furthering whatever aims Sseth shows them in dream-visions. Others withdraw from Yuan-ti tribal politics and then society as a whole to live in isolated seclusion, much the way many study-obsessed human wizards do. Like human mages, such Yuan-ti typically build or take over fortresses in which to carry out their business.

These ancient masters often engage in truly ambitious breeding experiments, or take up strange hobbies with astonishing vigor and enthusiasm. One tale tells of an ancient master who crafted full-sized, blown-glass replicas of attractive humans. Another describes one who stole all the tomes from Candlekeep, translated them into other tongues, and then covertly returned them.

Hit Die: d8.



An ancient master

Requirements

To qualify to become an ancient master, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Race: Yuan-ti.

Alignment: Any evil (usually chaotic evil).

Base Attack Bonus: +9.

Skills: Concentration 15 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 10 ranks.

Special: Access to an extensive magical library, a tutor of any race who possesses at least fourteen sorcerer or wizard class levels, or any psionic powers or psionic class levels.

Class Skills

The ancient master's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (any) (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Speak Language, and Spellcraft (Int). See Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the ancient master prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Ancient masters gain no proficiency with any weapon, armor, or shield.

***Attraction* (Sp)**: An ancient master can plant a compelling attraction in the mind of any subject within 25 feet of her. The attraction can be toward a particular person, object, action, or event. The target takes all reasonable steps to get close to the person, find the object, attend the event, or perform the action designated, though it does not suffer from blind obsession and does not take extreme risks to do so. The subject can recognize danger but does not flee unless the threat is immediate. If the ancient master specifies herself as the object of the attraction, she cannot command the subject indiscriminately, though the subject does listen to her (even if it disagrees). This ability grants the ancient master a +4 bonus on Charisma checks made to influence the subject for the duration of the effect. *Attraction* lasts for 1 hour. This ability is usable once per day at 1st level and an additional once per day every three ancient master levels thereafter (twice per day at 4th level, three times per day at 7th level, and four times per day at 10th level). This ability is the equivalent of a 1st-level spell.

***Conceal Thoughts* (Sp)**: At 2nd level, an ancient master can protect her own thoughts (but not those of any other creature) from analysis. She gains a +4 bonus on saving throws against divination effects that reveal emotions or thoughts and a +20 circumstance bonus on Bluff checks made to oppose Sense Motive checks. This ability is always active.

Body Equilibrium (Ex): A 3rd-level or higher ancient master can adjust her body density to match that of any solid or liquid she stands on. Thus, she can walk on water, quicksand, or even a spider's web without sinking or breaking through. (This ability does not confer any resistance to particularly sticky webs.) She can move at her normal speed, but she cannot run on an unfirm surface without sinking or breaking through. If she falls while using this ability, damage from the impact is halved. This ability is usable at will.

***Levitate* (Sp)**: Upon reaching 4th level, an ancient master can use *levitate* (caster level equals ancient master level) once per day. She gains one additional use per day of this ability at 7th level and another at 10th level.

***Dimension Door* (Sp)**: At 5th level, an ancient master can use *dimension door* (caster level equals ancient master level) once per day. She gains one additional use per day of this ability at 8th level.

Shadow Concealment (Su): At 6th level, an ancient master gains the ability to take on shadow form for 1 minute per ancient master level. While in this state, she becomes incorporeal, appearing as a shadowy image of herself. She gains a +10 circumstance bonus on Hide checks while this ability is in effect. The ancient master gains one additional use per day of this ability at 9th level.

***Baleful Teleport* (Sp)**: At 7th level, an ancient master can disperse miniscule portions of a target creature or object weighing no more than 300 pounds. The target takes 9d6 points of damage from this attack. A successful Will save (DC 10 + ancient master level + ancient master's Cha modifier) halves the damage. A target under a *dimensional anchor* effect is immune to *baleful teleport*. This ability is usable once per day at 7th level and twice per day at 10th level. This ability is the equivalent of a 5th-level spell.

***Claws of the Vampire* (Sp)**: When an ancient master reaches 8th level, she can cause the fingers on both her hands (if she has any) to grow to wicked, 2-inch-long points. She gains a claw attack (base damage 1d8 points) that does not provoke an attack of opportunity. Whenever she uses this attack, she heals one-half the base damage that she deals with *claws of the vampire*. She can use this ability in conjunction with feats, abilities, or spells that allow additional attacks in the same round. This effect lasts for 1 hour per ancient master level and can be used once per day. This ability is the equivalent of a 4th-level spell.

***Mind Probe* (Sp)**: Once per day, a 9th-level or higher ancient master can read the thoughts of any one living creature within 30 feet that fails a Fortitude save (DC 10 + ancient master level + ancient master's Cha modifier). All the target's memories and knowledge are accessible to her, from memories deep below the surface to those easily called to mind. She can learn the answer to one question per round, to the best of the target's knowledge. She can also probe a sleeping target, though it may make a Will save (DC 10 + ancient master level + ancient master's Cha modifier) to wake after each question. Targets that do not wish to be probed can attempt to move beyond the ability's range unless somehow hindered. The ancient master poses the questions telepathically

TABLE 12—1: THE ANCIENT MASTER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	*Attraction* 1/day
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	*Conceal thoughts*
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	*Body equilibrium*
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	*Attraction* 2/day, *levitate* 1/day
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	*Dimension door* 1/day
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	Shadow concealment 1/day
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	*Attraction* 3/day, *baleful teleport* 1/day, *levitate* 2/day
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	*Claws of the vampire* 1/day, *dimension door* 2/day
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	*Mind probe* 1/day, shadow concealment 2/day
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	*Attraction* 4/day, *baleful teleport* 2/day, *disintegrate* 1/day, *levitate* 3/day

and the answers are imparted directly to her mind. She and the target do not need to speak the same language, though less intelligent creatures may yield up only appropriate visual images in answer to her questions. Creatures protected by *mind blank* are immune to this ability. *Mind probe* lasts for 1 minute per ancient master level. This ability is the equivalent of a 5th-level spell.

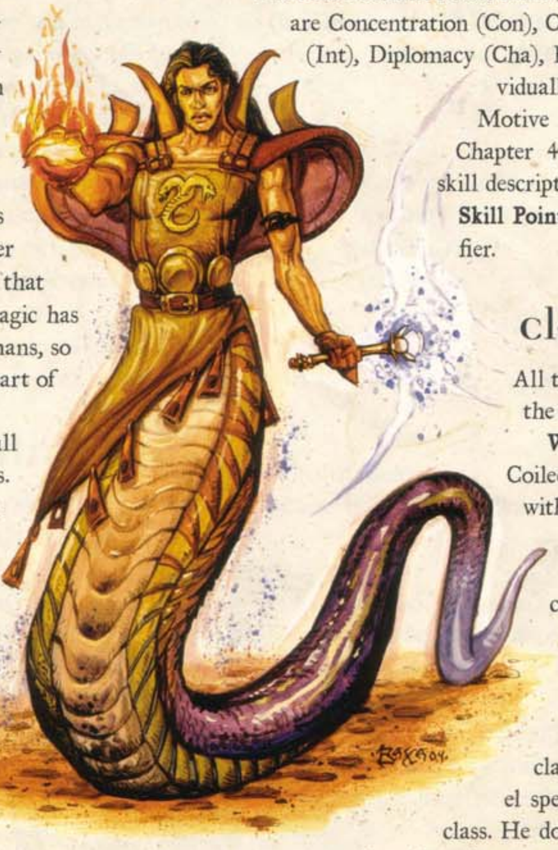
***Disintegrate* (Sp)**: A 10th-level ancient master can use *disintegrate* (caster level 10th) once per day.

coiled cabalist

Standing apart from the priests of Sseth but careful never to draw their collective ire by openly opposing them, the members of the Coiled Cabal pursue the arcane arts largely in secrecy. The creed of this shadowy organization holds that true power can be obtained through mastery of magic that has nothing to do with gods. After all, magic has worked well as a weapon for the puny humans, so there's no reason that it shouldn't also be part of the vrael olo arsenal.

Cabalists work in oumkathuss—small groups of no more than a dozen individuals. Each oumkathuss reports to up to three overhoods, who in turn report to higher-ranking overhoods within a hidden hierarchy. Rank in the Coiled Cabal is not closely tied to level or magical mastery, but it is linked to achievements. A typical member is a sorcerer or wizard with enough experience and prestige to have attracted half a dozen apprentices.

Hit Die: d8.



A coiled cabalist

Illustration by Thomas Baxa

Requirements

To qualify to become a coiled cabalist, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Race: Yuan-ti.

Alignment: Any evil (usually chaotic evil).

Base Attack Bonus: +7.

Skills: Concentration 9 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 9 ranks.

Spellcasting: Able to cast 3rd-level arcane spells.

class skills

The coiled cabalist's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (any) (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spellcraft (Int). See Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

class features

All the following are class features of the coiled cabalist prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Coiled cabalists gain no proficiency with any weapon, armor, or shield.

Spells per Day/Spells Known: When a new coiled cabalist level is gained, the character gains new spells per day (and spells known, if applicable) as if he had also gained a level in whatever arcane spellcasting class granted him access to 3rd-level spells before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (bonus metamagic or item creation feats, bard or assassin abilities, and so on), except for an increased effective level of spellcasting. This essentially means that he adds the level of coiled cabalist to the level of whatever other arcane spellcasting

TABLE 12–2: THE COILED CABALIST

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day/Spells Known
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	*Handfang* (venom)	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	*Spell turning* (1d4)	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
3rd	+1	+1	+1	+3	*Handfang* (acid)	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
4th	+2	+1	+1	+4	—	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
5th	+2	+1	+1	+4	*Handfang* (paralysis)	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
6th	+3	+2	+2	+5	*Spell turning* (1d4+2)	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
7th	+3	+2	+2	+5	*Handfang* (unconsciousness)	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
8th	+4	+2	+2	+6	—	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
9th	+4	+3	+3	+6	*Handfang* (damage)	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
10th	+5	+3	+3	+7	*Spell turning* (1d4+4)	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class

class granted him access to 3rd-level spells, then determines spells per day, spells known, and caster level accordingly.

If a character had more than one arcane spellcasting class that granted access to 3rd-level spells before he became a coiled cabalist, he must decide to which class he adds each level of coiled cabalist for the purpose of determining spells per day and spells known.

***Handfang* (Sp)**: At 1st level, a coiled cabalist can use *handfang* (caster level equals arcane caster level; see Spells in Chapter 11) once per day. The Fortitude save DC for the poison is 10 + coiled cabalist level + coiled cabalist's Cha modifier.

Coiled Cabalist Level	***Handfang* Effect**	**Save***
1st	Venom	Fortitude negates (initial and secondary)
3rd	1d4+1 points of acid damage	None
5th	Paralysis for 1d4 rounds	Fortitude negates
7th	Unconsciousness for 1d6 or until the victim takes hours damage	Fortitude negates
9th	4d4 points of damage	Fortitude half

*The save DC for all effects is 10 + coiled cabalist level + coiled cabalist's Cha modifier.

As he advances in the prestige class, the coiled cabalist can use his *handfang* ability to deliver venom altered by his magical knowledge to produce other effects instead of poison, according to the table above.

***Spell Turning* (Sp)**: Three times per day, a 2nd-level coiled cabalist can produce an effect identical to that of the *spell turning* spell (caster level equals character level), except that he can turn back only 1d4 spell levels per round. The number of spell levels he can turn back per round increases to 1d4+2 at 6th level and to 1d4+4 at 10th level.

Fang of Sseth

The Viper's Fangs is a secretive order of spies that operates throughout Faerûn on behalf of the yuan-ti. Its membership is largely made up of humans and yuan-ti pureblood thieves, assassins, and thugs. Members refer to each other as Vipers and follow a fraternal code that's been known to override the orders of powerful Yuan-ti priests, coiled cabalists, and tribal leaders. The code is a simple one: Don't harm or steal from other Vipers.

Members of the Viper's Fangs know that a slow, soft, and subtle manner of operation is the right way to power for the yuan-ti. Indeed, they champion careful husbanding of human prosperity so that the prize is always worth taking (and ever more valuable). However, as the saying goes, "There are times when the Vipers must bite, and that's when they call on their fangs." The Fangs of Sseth constitute the strike force of the Vipers—the stealthy killers who leave no trace.

Hit Die: d8.

A fang of Sseth

Illustration by Dennis Crabapple

Requirements

To qualify to become a fang of Sseth, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Race: Yuan-ti, human, Yuan-ti-human crossbreed, tainted one, or other Yuan-ti-created being.

Alignment: Any evil (usually chaotic evil).

Base Attack Bonus: +7.

Religion: The candidate must worship Sseth and only Sseth.

Feats: Any two of the following: Alertness, Deceitful, Deft Hands, Investigator, Negotiator, Nimble Fingers, Persuasive, Stealthy.

Special: The candidate must have slain in the name of Sseth and aided a Yuan-ti without prearranged payment or reward.

Class Skills

The fang of Sseth's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (any) (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (local) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Open Lock (Dex), Perform (act) (Cha), Profession (Wis), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Spot (Wis), Use Magic Device (Cha), and Use Rope (Dex). See Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All the following are class features of the fang of Sseth prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Fangs of Sseth gain no proficiency with any weapon, armor, or shield.

Enhanced Ranged Attacks (Ex): At 1st level, the fang of Sseth gains a +1 bonus on attack rolls with all ranged weapons. This bonus increases to +2 at 6th level.

Sneak Attack (Ex): This ability functions like the rogue ability of the same name. The extra damage dealt increases by +1d6 at 4th, 7th and 10th levels. If a

Table 12–3: The Fang of Sseth

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+0	+2	+0	Enhanced ranged attacks +1, poison resistance +1, poison use, sneak attack +1d6
2nd	+1	+0	+3	+0	Bonus feat
3rd	+2	+1	+3	+1	Poison resistance +2, serpent shape
4th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Sneak attack +2d6
5th	+3	+1	+4	+1	Poison resistance +3, spider climb
6th	+4	+2	+5	+2	Enhanced ranged attacks +2
7th	+5	+2	+5	+2	Poison resistance +4, sneak attack +3d6
8th	+6	+2	+6	+2	*Favor of Sseth*
9th	+6	+3	+6	+3	Poison resistance +5
10th	+7	+3	+7	+3	Sneak attack +4d6

fang of Sseth gets a sneak attack bonus from another source (such as rogue levels) the bonuses on damage stack. Furthermore, fang of Sseth levels stack with any other appropriate class levels (such as rogue or assassin) for the purpose of overcoming improved uncanny dodge.

Poison Resistance (Ex): Because a fang of Sseth trains with all sorts of poisons (not just reptile venoms), she becomes increasingly resistant to their effects. A 1st-level fang of Sseth gains a +1 bonus on saves against all poisons. This bonus increases by +1 for every two additional fang of Sseth levels gained (to +2 at 3rd level, +3 at 5th level, +4 at 7th level, and +5 at 9th level).

Poison Use (Ex): Fangs of Sseth are trained in the use of poison and never risk accidentally poisoning themselves when applying poison to a blade.

Bonus Feat: At 2nd level, the fang of Sseth gains the Snatch Arrows feat as a bonus feat if she does not already have it. If she already has Snatch Arrows, she instead gains Shot on the Run. If she already has that feat, she instead gains Manyshot. She need not meet the prerequisites to gain her bonus feat. A fang of Sseth who already has all three feats gains no benefit.

Serpent Shape (Su): A 3rd-level fang of Sseth gains the psionic ability to change into a Medium viper at will as a full-round action. A fang of Sseth who already possesses this ability (such as a Yuan-ti) instead gains the ability to assume completely human form. This ability functions like a *polymorph* spell (caster level 19th), except that the fang of Sseth regains no lost hit points. When in viper form, a fang of Sseth with a poisonous bite uses either her own venom or that of her viper form, whichever is more potent. She can remain in viper form for as long as she desires and resume her normal form as a full-round action.

Spider Climb (Su): A 5th-level or higher fang of Sseth can use *spider climb* (caster level equals fang of Sseth level) at will.

***Favor of Sseth* (Sp)**: Upon attaining 8th level, the fang of Sseth receives a visit from Sseth in her dreams, during which the god bites her. His venom imparts a special gift—the ability to move about without fear of detection by normal means. This ability functions like the *greater invisibility* spell (caster level equals fang of Sseth level), except that the fang is hidden from hearing and scent as well. She radiates silence to a radius of 5 feet, does not leave a scent, and cannot be detected by the scent ability. This effect lasts for 8 hours, though the fang of Sseth may end it earlier as a free action. This ability is the equivalent of a 6th-level spell.

Ex-Fangs of Sseth

A fang of Sseth who ceases to be evil, or who betrays Sseth or the Coiled Cabal loses all special abilities of the prestige class and may not progress any farther in levels as a fang of Sseth. She regains her abilities and advancement potential if she atones for her violations (see the *atonement* spell description in the *Player's Handbook*), as appropriate.

Master of Vipers

Most vrael olo work within their tribes, but a few become loners, rejecting the collective scheming and rising religious strife that marks yuan-ti tribal life. Some of these individuals embrace human society, trying to conceal their true natures and dwell among humans. Others "go wild," becoming independent wilderness explorers and jungle hunters. A rare handful recognize and follow a deepening affinity for their lesser kin—the venomous snakes. Such yuan-ti choose to dwell in wild places frequented by such creatures, such as sunny rock faces riddled with caverns, overgrown jungle ruins, and the like. These outcast yuan-ti eventually learn to hunt not only to feed themselves, but also to spread destruction far and wide for the pure pleasure of it. Tales among both yuan-ti and human adventurers call such individuals masters of vipers.

A master of vipers is always a lone Yuan-ti. He never joins adventuring parties and travels with nonvipers only to hide from pursuers or to scout potential prey.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To qualify to become a master of vipers, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Race: Yuan-ti.

Alignment: Any evil (usually chaotic evil).

Base Attack Bonus: +7.

Skill: Knowledge (nature) 8 ranks.

Feat: Great Fortitude.

Class Skills

The master of viper's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist

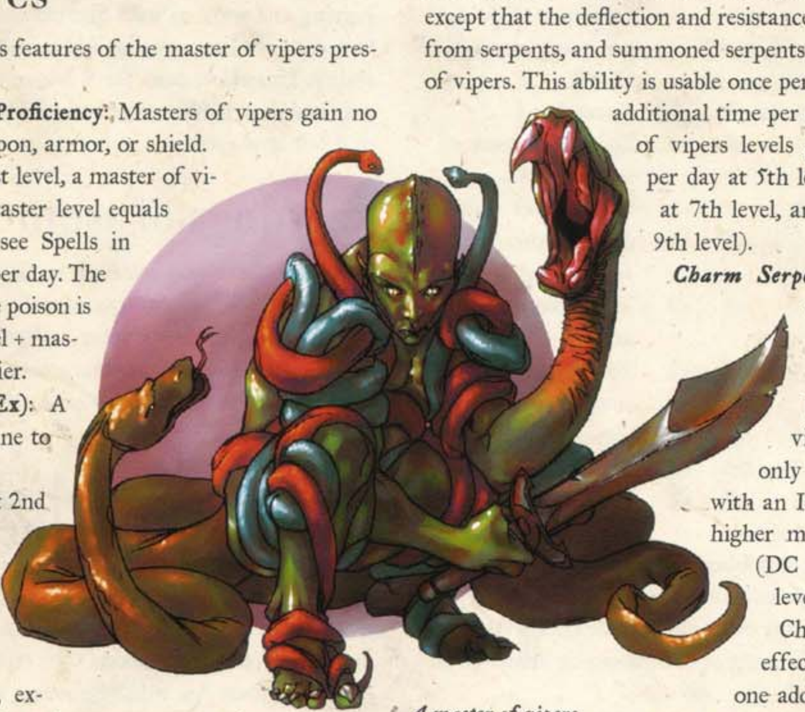
(Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Hide (Dex), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Survival (Wis), and Swim (Str). See Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

class features

All the following are class features of the master of vipers prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Masters of vipers gain no proficiency with any weapon, armor, or shield.



A master of vipers

Handfang **(Sp)**: At 1st level, a master of vipers can use *handfang* (caster level equals master of vipers level; see Spells in Chapter 11) three times per day. The Fortitude save DC for the poison is 10 + master of vipers level + master of vipers's Cha modifier.

Poison Immunity (Ex): A master of vipers is immune to all poisons.

Hold Serpent **(Sp)**: At 2nd level, a master of vipers gains the ability to paralyze a serpent as if with a *hold animal* spell (caster level equals master of vipers level), except that the effect works only on serpents and lasts for 1 round per master of vipers level. Any subject with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher may attempt a Will save (DC 10 + master of vipers level + master of vipers's Cha modifier) to negate the effect.

TABLE 12—4: THE MASTER OF VIPERS

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+0	+0	*Handfang*, poison immunity
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+0	*Hold serpent*
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+1	Ward serpents 1/day
4th	+3	+4	+1	+1	*Charm serpent* 1/day
5th	+3	+4	+1	+1	*Serpent dart* 3/day, serpent reach, ward serpents 2/day
6th	+4	+5	+2	+2	*Charm serpent* 2/day, *summon serpents*
7th	+5	+5	+2	+2	*Serpent dart* 4/day, *viper swarm*, ward serpents 3/day
8th	+6	+6	+2	+2	*Charm serpent* 3/day, great serpent
9th	+6	+6	+3	+3	*Serpent dart* 5/day, swarm shape, ward serpents 4/day
10th	+7	+7	+3	+3	*Charm serpent* 4/day, *translocate serpent*

Ward Serpents (Su): Beginning at 3rd level, a master of vipers can hold serpents at bay. This ability functions like a *protection from evil* spell (caster level equals master of vipers level), except that the deflection and resistance bonuses apply to attacks from serpents, and summoned serpents cannot touch the master of vipers. This ability is usable once per day at 3rd level and one additional time per day for every two master of vipers levels gained thereafter (twice per day at 5th level, three times per day at 7th level, and four times per day at 9th level).

Charm Serpent **(Sp)**: At 4th level, a master of vipers can use a limited form of *charm animal* (caster level equals master of vipers level) that affects only serpents. Any subject with an Intelligence score of 3 or higher may attempt a Will save (DC 10 + master of vipers level + master of vipers's Cha modifier) to negate the effect. This ability is usable one additional time per day for every two master of vipers levels gained (twice per day at 6th level, three times per day at 8th level, and four times per day at 10th level).

Serpent Dart **(Sp)**: At 5th level, a master of vipers can produce serpentlike darts from his pointing fingers. This ability functions like the *magic missile* spell (caster level equals master of vipers level), except that the missiles produced are Tiny vipers that deliver poison (injury, Fortitude DC 10 + master of vipers level + master of vipers's Con modifier, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con) in addition to the spell's damage. The *serpent darts* vanish after striking their targets. This ability is usable three times per day at 5th level, four times per day at 7th level, and five times per day at 9th level.

Serpent Reach (Ex): Three times per day, a 5th-level or higher master of vipers can transform his wrist into a flexible, serpentine form that can expand 2 feet per master of vipers level. This effect lasts for 2 rounds per master of vipers level. This ability enables the master of vipers to deliver touch spells at a distance and, when combined with *handfang*, to bite distant opponents. However, the serpentine wrist lacks the strength to constrict or entwine a foe. The master of vipers can expand or retract his wrist as a free action.

Summon Serpents **(Sp)**: At 6th level, a master of vipers can call any sort of serpent he has previously seen to fight or work for him. Two serpents of the same kind appear and obey the character's commands. For each new master of vipers level attained, an additional snake appears (three at 7th level, four at

Illustration by Kalman Andrasofszky

8th level, five at 9th level, and six at 10th level). The summoned serpents are all the same kind. This ability otherwise functions like a *summon nature's ally* spell.

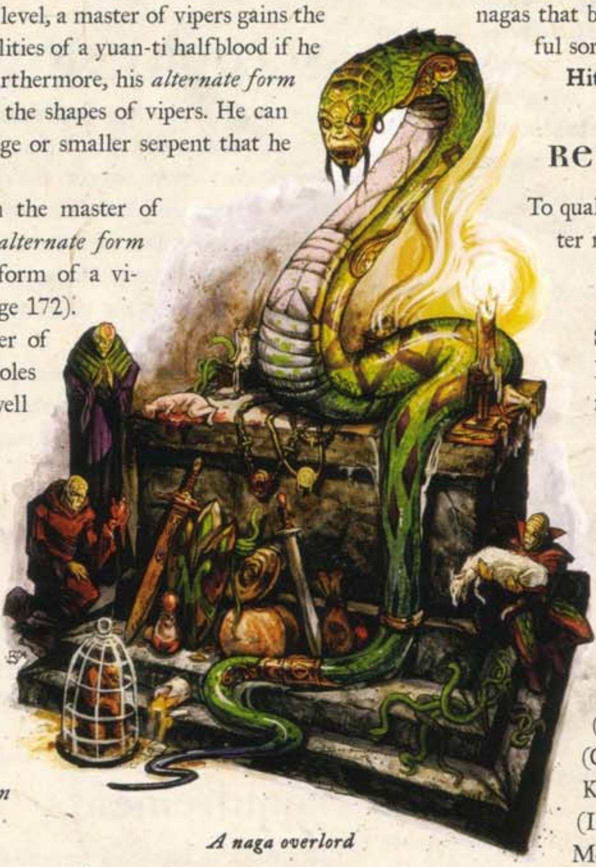
Viper Swarm **(Sp)**: Once per day, a 7th-level or higher master of vipers can summon a viper swarm (see *Fiend Folio* page 172) that moves as he directs. Use of this ability instantly ends any ward serpents, *charm serpent,* or *summon serpents* abilities that the character may have active.

Great Serpent (Su): At 8th level, a master of vipers gains the *chameleon power* and *scent* abilities of a yuan-ti halfblood if he did not already have them. Furthermore, his *alternate form* ability is no longer limited to the shapes of vipers. He can now take the form of any Huge or smaller serpent that he has seen before.

Swarm Shape (Su): When the master of vipers reaches 9th level, his *alternate form* ability expands to allow the form of a viper swarm (see *Fiend Folio* page 172). This ability enables the master of vipers to move through tiny holes where a foe cannot follow, as well as attack as a swarm.

Translocate Serpent **(Sp)**: At 10th level, a master of vipers can use a limited form of teleportation either to move a Medium or smaller serpent to a desired location, or to move himself to any spot within 5 feet of a serpent or the physical remains of one. This ability otherwise functions like the *dimension door* spell.

Illustration by Thomas Baxa



A naga overlord

Naga overlord

Naga overlords are evil masterminds who operate in secret, usually behind cults of devoted followers. They seek to enslave lesser races and use them to dominate whole communities. Naga overlords tend to be extremely vain, power-hungry, and obsessed with negating any threats to their safety and comfort. Many even exhibit powerful god complexes.

Most naga overlords are banelar nagas, dark nagas, ha-nagas, or spirit nagas, although rare evil representatives of other naga types are not unknown. Banelar overlords typically have levels in mystic theurge, while dark nagas, ha-nagas, and spirit nagas that become naga overlords usually are powerful sorcerers.

Hit Die: d8.

Requirements

To qualify to become a naga overlord, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Race: Naga.

Alignment: Any evil.

Skills: Bluff 4 ranks, Diplomacy 4 ranks, Intimidate 4 ranks, Sense Motive 4 ranks.

Feats: Extend Spell, Skill Focus (Intimidate), Spell Focus (enchantment).

Spellcasting: Able to cast *dominate person* as a spell.

Class skills

The naga overlord's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (None), Spellcraft (Int), Spot (Wis), and Use Magic Device (Cha). See Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

TABLE 12–5: THE NAGA OVERLORD

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day/Spells Known
1st	+0	+0	+0	+2	Enslave 1/day	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
2nd	+1	+0	+0	+3	Augment followers I	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
3rd	+2	+1	+1	+3	Tap slave 1/day	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
4th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Enslave 2/day	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
5th	+3	+1	+1	+4	Augment followers II	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
6th	+4	+2	+2	+5	Tap slave 2/day	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
7th	+5	+2	+2	+5	Enslave 3/day	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
8th	+6	+2	+2	+6	Augment followers III	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
9th	+6	+3	+3	+6	Tap slave 3/day	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class
10th	+7	+3	+3	+7	Enslave monster	+1 level of existing arcane spellcasting class

class features

All the following are class features of the naga overlord prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Naga overlords gain no proficiency with any weapon, armor, or shield.

Spells per Day/Spells Known: When a new naga overlord level is gained, the character gains new spells per day (and spells known, if applicable) as if he had also gained a level in whatever arcane spellcasting class he had (or could cast spells as) before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (bonus metamagic or item creation feats, bard or assassin abilities, and so on), except for an increased effective level of spellcasting. This essentially means that he adds the level of naga overlord to the level of whatever other arcane spellcasting class he had, then determines spells per day, spells known, and caster level accordingly.

If a character had more than one arcane spellcasting class before he became a naga overlord, he must decide to which class he adds each level of naga overlord for the purpose of determining spells per day and spells known.

Enslave (Su): A naga overlord can attempt to enslave any one living creature within 30 feet. The target must succeed on a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 naga overlord's character level + naga overlord's Cha modifier) or be affected as though by a *dominate person* spell (caster level equals naga overlord's arcane caster level). An enslaved creature obeys the naga overlord's telepathic commands until freed by *remove curse,* and it can attempt a new Will save every 24 hours to break free. The control is also broken if the naga overlord dies or travels more than 1 mile from its slave.

This ability is usable once per day at 1st level, twice per day at 4th level, and three times per day at 7th level.

Augment Followers I (Su): The naga overlord can augment the abilities of its followers. The following spells automatically function as if affected by the Extend Spell feat when cast by a 2nd-level or higher naga overlord: *bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, eagle's splendor, fox's cunning, mass bear's endurance, mass bull's strength, mass cat's grace, mass eagle's splendor, mass fox's cunning, mass owl's wisdom,* and *owl's wisdom.* These spells do not occupy higher spell slots or require additional casting time.

Tap Slave (Su): At 3rd level, a naga overlord can leech the lifeforce of any one enslaved follower within 1 mile as if using the *vampiric touch* spell (caster level equals naga overlord's arcane caster level), except that he need not actually touch the target. This ability is usable once per day at 3rd level, twice per day at 6th level, and three times per day at 9th level.

Augment Followers II (Su): The range of the following spells automatically becomes close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels) when they are cast by a 5th-level or higher naga overlord: *bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, eagle's splendor, fox's cunning, mass bear's endurance, mass bull's strength, mass cat's grace, mass eagle's splendor, mass fox's cunning, mass owl's wisdom,* and *owl's wisdom.*

Augment Followers III (Su): The following spells automatically function as if affected by the Extend Spell feat when cast by an 8th-level or higher naga overlord: *bear's endurance, bull's strength, cat's grace, eagle's splendor, fox's cunning, mass bear's endurance, mass bull's strength, mass cat's grace, mass eagle's splendor, mass fox's cunning, mass owl's wisdom,* and *owl's wisdom.* These spells do not occupy higher spell slots or require additional casting time.

Enslave Monster (Su): At 10th level, a naga overlord's enslave ability functions like *dominate monster* rather than *dominate person.*

serpent slayer

Any intelligent being who learns what the yuan-ti are up to can be considered a foe of the vrael olo, but some individuals devote their entire lives to thwarting the serpentfolk. Certain alert Harpers and Red Wizards fall into this category, as do high-ranking priests of human deities who have glimpsed the true might and nature of the yuan-ti. Such characters view the Slithering Ones as the ultimate doom of humankind if their power is not broken soon.

In recent decades, certain priests of Helm took vows to smash the yuan-ti and thereby became the first true serpent slayers. But this path is by no means limited to followers of the Vigilant One—or to clerics.

Serpent slayers aren't part of a formal organization, but they do aid each other whenever possible. They sometimes scratch small recognition marks on stone or in dirt to denote the location of a cache, hidden route, or suspicious feature. Their sign is an oval snake head with a forked tongue, impaled by a dagger through the head's lone visible eye. If this sign is surrounded by a diamond-shaped outline, it warns of danger.

Hit Die: d8.

requirements

To qualify to become a serpent slayer, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +6.

Skills: Concentration 4 ranks, Knowledge (nature) 2 ranks, Spot 4 ranks.

Feats: Combat Casting, Dodge, Mobility.

Spells: Able to cast arcane or divine spells.

class skills

The serpent slayer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Balance (Dex), Concentration (Con), Craft (any) (Int), Knowledge (all skills taken individually) (Int), Listen (Wis), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Spellcraft (Int), and Survival (Wis). See Chapter 4 of the *Player's Handbook* for skill descriptions.

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier.

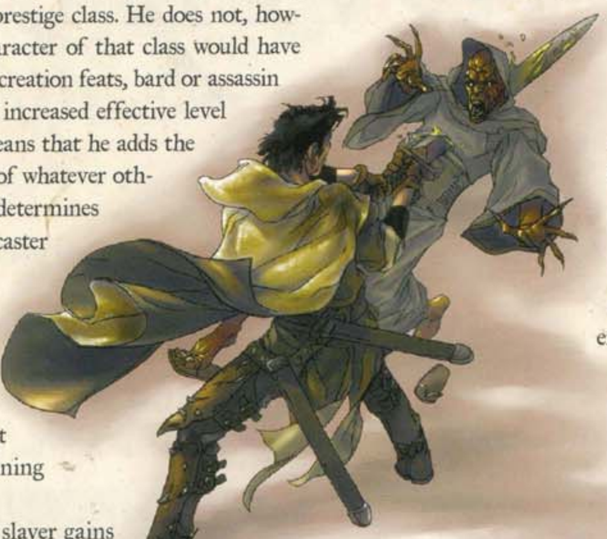
class features

All the following are class features of the serpent slayer prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Serpent slayers gain no proficiency with any weapon, armor, or shield. Armor check penalties for armor heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Sleight of Hand, and Tumble, and double the normal armor check penalty applies to Swim checks.

Spells per Day/Spells Known: When a new serpent slayer level is gained, the character gains new spells per day (and spells known, if applicable) as if he had also gained a level in whatever spellcasting class he had before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained (bonus metamagic or item creation feats, bard or assassin abilities, and so on), except for an increased effective level of spellcasting. This essentially means that he adds the level of serpent slayer to the level of whatever other spellcasting class he had, then determines spells per day, spells known, and caster level accordingly.

If a character had more than one spellcasting class before he became a serpent slayer, he must decide to which class he adds each level of serpent slayer for the purpose of determining spells per day and spells known.



A serpent slayer

Illustration by Kalman Andrasofszky

Venomguard (Ex): A serpent slayer gains a +4 bonus on saving throws against the venom of all Scaled Ones.

***Detect Poison* (Sp)**: At 2nd level, a serpent slayer gains the psionic ability to use *detect poison* (caster level equals serpent slayer level) at will.

Poison Immunity (Ex): At 3rd level, a serpent slayer becomes immune to all poisons.

***Locate Serpent* (Sp)**: A 4th-level serpent slayer gains the ability to sense Scaled Ones nearby. This ability functions like the *locate creature* spell (caster level equals serpent slayer level), except that it detects only Scaled Ones. The serpent slayer can determine the kind of Scaled One detected, but a specific individual can be distinguished only if the serpent slayer has previously touched her. This ability is usable twice per day at 4th level, and one additional time per day for every two serpent slayer levels thereafter (three times per day at 6th level, four times per day at 8th level, and five times per day at 10th level.

***Neutralize Poison* (Sp)**: At 5th level, a serpent slayer can use *neutralize poison* (caster level equals serpent slayer level) three times per day.

Ward Serpents (Su): Beginning at 6th level, a serpent slayer can hold serpents at bay. This ability functions like a *protection from evil* spell (caster level equals serpent slayer level), except that the deflection and resistance bonuses apply to attacks from serpents, and summoned serpents cannot touch the serpent slayer. This ability is usable once per day at 6th level and one additional time per day for every two serpent slayer levels gained thereafter (twice per day at 8th level and three times per day at 10th level).

Witherscales (Su): At 7th level, a serpent slayer can deal 2d4 points of damage to any Scaled One with a melee touch attack.

***Strike of the Serpent* (Sp)**: Once per day, an 8th-level serpent slayer can use *true strike* (caster level equals serpent slayer level) to augment an attack against any Scaled One. He gains another daily use of this ability at 10th level.

Smite Serpent (Su): Once per day, a 9th-level or higher serpent slayer can attempt to smite a Scaled One with one normal melee attack. He adds his Charisma bonus (if any) to his attack roll and deals one extra point of damage per serpent slayer level. If the serpent slayer accidentally smites a Scaleless One, the smite has no effect, but the ability is still used up for that day.

TABLE 12–5: THE SERPENT SLAYER

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells per Day/Spells Known
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Venomguard	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	*Detect poison*	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
3rd	+1	+3	+1	+3	Poison immunity	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
4th	+2	+4	+1	+4	*Locate serpent* 2/day	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
5th	+2	+4	+1	+4	*Neutralize poison*	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
6th	+3	+5	+2	+5	*Locate serpent* 3/day, ward serpents 1/day	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
7th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Witherscales	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
8th	+4	+6	+2	+6	*Locate serpent* 4/day, *strike of the serpent* 1/day, ward serpents 2/day	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
9th	+4	+6	+3	+6	Smite serpent	+1 level of existing spellcasting class
10th	+5	+7	+3	+7	*Locate serpent* 5/day, *strike of the serpent* 2/day, ward serpents 3/day	+1 level of existing spellcasting class

Adventures

The following adventures feature Scaled Ones of all sorts. You (the DM) need the D&D core rulebooks, including the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, the *Monster Manual*, and the *Fiend Folio*. As always, feel free to adapt the material presented here as you see fit to make it work with your campaign.

To get started, read through the scenario you wish to use at least once to familiarize yourself with the situation, NPCs, and challenges. Make adjustments as necessary to fit the storyline into your campaign.

Black Viper Altar

Although many humans think of a Yuan-ti temple as a snake-festooned, ruined city hidden deep in some remote jungle, most vrael olo actually worship in much smaller places. The temple site presented here is little more than a concealed altar. Many similar places of worship can be found in the cellars and sewers of human cities, forest clearings, and other sites where Yuan-ti conceal their presence.

Background

The Black Viper Altar lies beneath the overgrown, long abandoned ruins of a human town in a jungle area. Beneath the stone foundations that once supported homes is a spiral tunnel that leads to a central altar chamber.

Lizardfolk guard the temple against intruders, reset its traps, maintain the trails leading to the ruins, and keep the area clear of all jungle creatures except snakes. The lizardfolk withdraw into their lair (area 3) if intruders approach by day, but they emerge at night to make stealthy attacks on those who camp and sleep in the ruins.

This adventure is suitable for 6th-level characters.

1. Broken Hall

At the center of the ruins lies its largest chamber.

> Stone pillars support the vine-choked fragments of what was once a vaulted roof covering this vast chamber. Rubble and jungle plants litter the cracked paving that forms its floor, but something seems to have kept certain areas clear of the spreading vines that sprawl and entwine everywhere else. Ten broad stone steps descend from one clear area to a wall where three closed stone doors stand in a row.

The staircase is 70 feet wide, and the descent is 20 feet. Each of the doors in the stone wall is 10 feet high and 10 feet wide, hinged on the left, with a pull-ring mounted on the right-hand edge.

Stone Doors (3): 4 in. thick, hardness 8, hp 60, break DC 28.

1A. Right and Center Tunnels (EL 6)

The center door and the one on the right both open into long, dark, tunnels.

> Thick cobwebs beaded with moisture cover the walls of this dark, stone-lined tunnel. Here and there, encrustations of creeping mold are visible, and the shriveled bodies of spiders, each the size of a human hand, litter the floor.

Each 10-foot-by-10-foot tunnel extends 60 feet straight back and slightly downward. Then it curves 180 degrees (the center tunnel to the left and the rightmost one to the right) within the second 60 feet of its length and starts a steep descent. Both then remain straight and level for another 40 feet before ending in rockfalls that choke them off entirely. No amount of digging can uncover any feature of the treasure chambers into which they once led.

The only creatures still inhabiting these tunnels are harmless spiders no larger than a human fingernail.

Traps: The corridor walls are lined with 2-inch-diameter holes, one every 10 feet, at varying heights off the floor (sixteen per tunnel). These openings are hidden by cobwebs and dangling threads of mold that, if burned, shrivels and gives off wall-clinging, concealing smoke. Whenever a creature in contact with the floor moves past one, a poisoned arrow springs forth. Each of these holes contains a spring mechanism that resets with a distinct click when an arrow is thrust into it.

Poisoned Arrow Traps: CR 1; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +12 ranged (1d6 plus poison, arrow); poison (Huge viper venom, DC 14 Fort save resists, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 20. *Market Price:* 1,600 gp.

At the end of each tunnel, the yuan-ti have placed an additional trap. An unlocked treasure chest fires eight poisoned arrows in a cone-shaped arrangement when opened.

Poisoned Arrow Chest Trap: CR 5; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +12 ranged (8d6 plus poison, arrow); multiple targets (all within 10 ft. of chest); poison (Huge viper venom, DC 14 Fort save resists, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 20. *Market Price:* 8,000 gp.

Treasure: Each chest contains four stone pendants carved with wriggling serpents, but these are merely adornments with no powers. The lizardfolk and yuan-ti do not hesitate to attack anyone wearing or displaying one, since they know the items come from a trap.

1B. LEFT TUNNEL

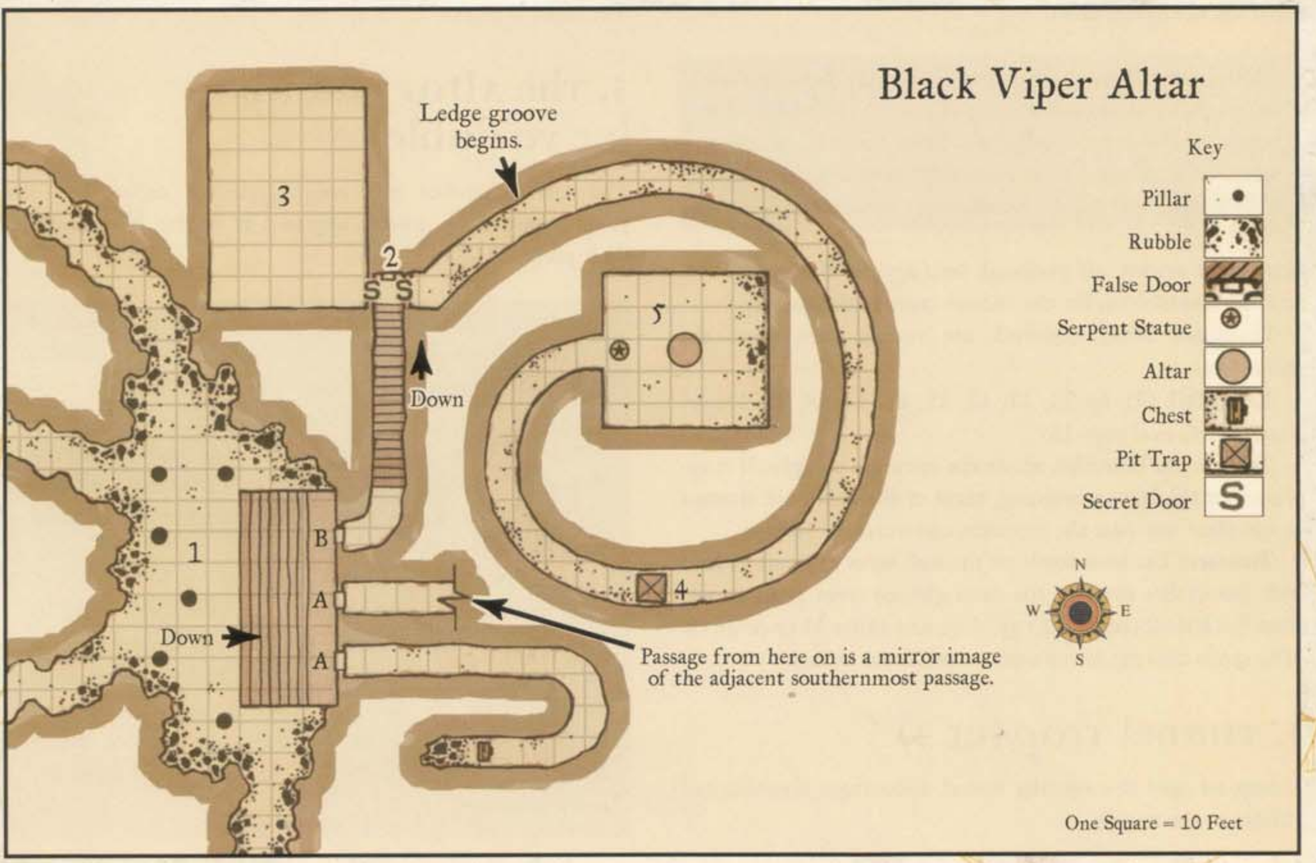
The leftmost door opens into a long, dark, stone-lined tunnel that is similar at first glance to the other two, though it is cleaner. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the characters look inside.

> The door on the left opens into a dark, stone-lined tunnel that immediately turns sharply left. The walls are smooth and well maintained.

This 10-foot-by-10-foot passage is free of cobwebs and mold. After the turn, it becomes a steep stone staircase that descends 70 feet. Read or paraphrase the following aloud if the PCs descend the stairs.

> The staircase ends in a 10-foot-square, empty stone room with a single closed stone door (8 feet wide and 12 feet high) directly ahead. The wriggling outline of a snake in a caduceus pose has been skillfully scratched into the door. The walls and floor are clean.

Both side walls of this chamber can be swung out like huge doors to reveal other areas if certain combinations of widely separated stones are depressed simultaneously (Search DC 30 to discover the unlatching combinations). The wall on the left opens into the lizardfolk lair in area 3, and the one on the right



allows entry to a rough-floored, spiral tunnel that descends to the temple proper (area 4 and beyond).

2. The Serpent Door (EL 6)

The serpent-marked door is an elaborate trap. Opening it reveals a shallow niche that leads nowhere.

Trap: When the door opens, ten poisoned arrows spring forth from a metal frame. Five of them are aimed up the stairs, three fire straight ahead, and the remaining two are angled to either side of the chamber. The trap fires once, after which the lizardfolk must restock it with arrows and reset it by closing the door. The arrow-firing mechanisms can be removed with a successful DC 20 Disable Device check, but failure causes the entire metal frame to topple over onto anyone in front of the door, dealing 1d4+3 points of damage. A successful DC 20 Reflex save allows a character to jump clear and avoid the damage.

Poisoned Arrow Door Trap: CR 6; mechanical; location trigger; manual reset; Atk +12 ranged (10d6 plus poison, arrow), poison (Huge viper venom, DC 14 Fort save resists, 1d6 Con/1d6 Con); Search DC 21; Disable Device DC 20. *Market Price:* 9,600 gp.

3. Lizardfolk Lair (EL 6)

The lizardfolk guards spend their time here when they are not out hunting for food, patrolling and tending temple areas, or standing guard in the ruins. Read or paraphrase the following when the characters enter.

> Piles of gnawed bones from a variety of creatures (including humans) are placed at intervals along the walls. Nine human skulls hang upside down from the wall at widely separated locations. Numerous arrows, carefully placed with their tips against the wall, occupy one corner.

Sixty-eight arrows, all poisoned, lean against the wall. These serve as ammunition for the various traps in the complex.

Creatures: Nine lizardfolk are resting here when the PCs arrive.

Lizardfolk (9): hp 11, 12, 12, 13, 13, 13, 14, 14, 15; see *Monster Manual* page 169.

Tactics: The lizardfolk attack the intruders on sight. If it appears that the PCs are winning, three of the lizardfolk attempt to win their way past the intruders and warn the yuan-ti.

Treasure: The nine skulls on the wall serve as bowls to hold each lizardfolk's share of the coins gleaned from previous victims. Each skull contains 14 gp, 6 sp, and either 17 cp or 16 cp. (The spoils thus far haven't quite worked out evenly.)

4. Tunnel Trap (EL 4)

A trap set into this curving tunnel discourages unauthorized visitors to the temple.

> About 40 feet along the steadily descending tunnel, shallow grooves begin in the walls at floor level and slowly climb until they form 2-inch-deep ledges about 5 feet high on both walls.

The ledges are bare and empty, except for a few human finger bones (marked with little holes so they can be used as dice) in a little heap on the left-side ledge, about 60 feet from the point where the grooves began (Spot DC 15). At the spot marked 4 on the map, a coiled serpent has been deeply carved into the rough, fissured stone floor.

Trap: Approximately 20 feet beyond the coiled-serpent carving is a trapdoor that conceals a pit. A 10-foot-long section of the tunnel floor covering the entire width of the passage collapses as soon as any Small or larger creature steps on it. The trap has a hidden switch bypass that allows safe passage. Depressing a thumb-sized stone set into the ledge on the left tunnel wall beside the coiled-serpent carving deactivates the trap for 1 minute. Thereafter, it resets itself.

Trapdoor Pit: CR 4; mechanical; location trigger; automatic reset; hidden switch bypass (Search DC 30); DC 24 Reflex save avoids; 30 ft. deep (3d6, fall); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 26. *Market Price:* 23,600 gp.

Development: Close examination (Search DC 14) of the carving reveals that its eyes can be depressed slightly. Doing so releases a catch, causing the entire carving to pop up like a poorly seated lid. Opening this hinged piece of stone reveals a 1-foot-deep, 2-foot-diameter circular storage niche in the floor. The niche is empty.

5. The Altar Chamber (EL Variable)

The altar chamber was once a storage cellar, but the yuan-ti have made several upgrades to render it suitable for their purposes.

> The curving tunnel finally ends in a large room carved out of bedrock. Directly in front of the tunnel mouth, about 5 feet into the room, stands a gigantic statue of a serpent carved from glossy black stone. Its coils are wrapped in rings behind it, and dozens of smaller serpents with gaping mouths sprout from its scales. Among them rises a single pair of humanlike arms, their hands raised high with palms out.
>
> The center of the chamber is dominated by a huge, circular disc of dark stone with a shallow bowl carved into its top. Scores of snakes intertwined in a random pattern are carved all around its sides. On the ceiling of the chamber, directly above the disc, is a relief-carved boss depicting many intertwined, coiling snakes. A pile of stone rubble occupies the center of the wall directly across from the entrance tunnel.

The altar chamber is 50 feet square and 20 feet high, and the tunnel opens into the central 10 feet of one wall. The pile of stone rubble marks the location of the human access tunnel that once led down to this cellar.

Trap: The entire statue is coated with malyss root paste, a strong contact poison.

Poisoned Statue: CR 3; mechanical; touch trigger (attached); manual reset; poison (malyss root paste, DC 16 Fortitude save resists, 1 Dex/2d4 Dex); Search DC 22; Disable Device 20. *Market Price:* 4,400 gp.

Development: The humanlike hands of the statue are 16 feet off the floor and positioned as though to hold small items, but they are empty. The coils of the statue conceal an unlocked door that opens to reveal a small storage niche. Inside are sixteen human skulls (relics of memorable sacrifices).

CEILING BOSS

Examination of the ceiling boss (Search DC 10) reveals that most of it is covered with a fine layer of soot, probably from altar fires. The only portions of the boss that remain clean are several carved snake bodies that arch down to form handles of a sort. Numerous small holes artfully concealed within the design can also be seen.

Anyone grasping the handles can rotate the boss counterclockwise, though it moves slowly and with considerable creaking. This motion releases a catch that allows the boss to swing downward on stone hinges. A counterweight block, positioned above the boss to prevent it from falling down the circular hole, moves with in tandem with it by virtue of six smooth-carved, oiled stone spheres that serve as wheels. Moving the boss arouses the vipers that are resting atop the counterweight block (see Creatures, below).

Creatures: Eight Small vipers rest atop the counterweight behind the ceiling boss.

Small Vipers (8): hp 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4, 4; see *Monster Manual* page 200.

Tactics: The vipers thrust their heads out of the concealed holes to strike at anyone within reach.

Treasure: When the boss swings down, it reveals a circular hole in the ceiling that offers access to a storage chamber above, where the counterweight block turns. The DM's choice of temple treasure may be found here. Alternatively, the temple complex may be expanded with additional chambers, tunnels, and foes.

BLACK VIPER ALTAR

The stone disc in the middle of the room is an altar to Sseth. The Black Viper Altar stands 4 feet high and measures 12 feet in diameter. Several circular depressions are carved around the 6-inch-wide lip of the bowl, and in one of these is a heap of sixteen glossy red stones. Though they resemble gemstones, they are merely pieces of red glass bearing a spell. Disturbing any one of the "stones" causes it to vanish and be replaced by a Huge viper that appears within 20 feet of it. If the entire heap of stones is swept into a sack, all sixteen snakes appear simultaneously, some positioned so as to block access to the tunnel mouth.

Creatures: There are no creatures present when the PCs arrive, but their actions may summon sixteen Huge vipers.

Huge Vipers (16): hp 33, 33, 33, 33, 33, 33, 33, 33, 36, 36, 36, 36, 36, 38, 44, 50; see *Monster Manual* page 200.

Tactics: Each viper immediately moves to attack the creature that disturbed its stone. If that individual dies or moves beyond reach, the snake attacks any other non-Yuan-ti in the altar room.

Concluding the Adventure

Once the PCs overpower the resident lizardfolk and locate the treasure behind the ceiling boss, the complex contains nothing else of interest. If they desecrate or destroy the altar, they may be rewarded by their own churches (if appropriate), but they will certainly draw the ire of the yuan-ti, who will go to great lengths to hunt them down and destroy or enslave them.

Adderposts

In the town of Essembra in northern Battledale, just a few hundred feet south of the central Battle Court (marshaling ground), stands the infamous junk and pawnshop known as Adderposts. Named for its odd, serpentine-carved, spiraling door pillars, this notorious shop nominally deals in secondhand goods, though its proprietor makes most of his money by serving as the local fence for stolen property. Customers come to Adderposts from as far away as northern Sembia to conduct shady transactions outside the purview of their peers and to purchase mordayn powder for conversion into the drug known as dreammist (see *Lords of Darkness* page 183).

This adventure is suitable for four 13th-level characters.

Background

Millennia before the founding of Essembra, Adderposts was the site of a minor sarrukh temple of Sss'thasine'ss, and the catacombs beneath it still hold several dark relics of that evil god. After the fall of Myth Drannor, a chance discovery of the long-buried sarrukh ruins led to the open establishment of a temple of Sss'thasine'ss in which the long-forgotten deity was venerated as a totem of venomous creatures, including scorpions, snakes, spiders, and the like. (In truth, it was Talona, the Lady of Poison, who backed the beast cult.) The temple's motto, "The Serpent Never Sleeps," has since entered the local lexicon of Battledale, although it has lost its original attribution. This phrase is now understood to mean "the forces of evil never rest."

The cult of Sss'thasine'ss faded away within a few decades of its establishment. Its former temple, which had come to be known as Adderposts, was used for a variety of other purposes in the years that followed, until at last it became the shop it is today. In the Year of the Worm (1356 DR), Duskar Flamehaern, proprietor of Adderposts, chanced upon a secret door leading to the catacombs below and began using them to store the stolen goods he had agreed to fence.

Three years later, in the Year of the Serpent (1359 DR), a spirit naga named Ssensariith stumbled through a *portal* that Duskar had never found and claimed the catacombs for its own. Employing a potent mixture of Art, charisma, and narcissism, the spirit naga convinced Duskar and his family to venerate it as the divine incarnation of Sss'thasine'ss. Under Ssensariith's direction, Duskar slowly expanded his illegal activities to include selling drugs and capturing slaves.

Today, Adderposts is the center of a small but active cult of Battledarran snake worshipers who control most of the illicit activities in Essembra under the direction of Ssensariith. Although some Battledarrans suspect that shady activities occur at the pawn and junk shop, none realize the extent of the cult's activities.

Major NPCs

The following NPCs live or work in the area of Adderposts and may be encountered at various points during this adventure.

DUSKAR FLAMEHAERN

The proprietor of Adderposts is a soft-voiced human of few words and nocturnal habits. He dwells above the shop with his three daughters: Esvele, Lhareene, and Rowan. He is present at the shop for a time each day, but he keeps very late hours for discreet meetings with unsavory allies. Duskar is a self-taught disciple of Sss'thasine'ss who venerates the forgotten deity's beast cult aspect as the Lord of Venom. Regular patrons of Adderposts know that Duskar keeps a loaded hand crossbow at the ready at all times.

In addition to acting as a local fence, Duskar has established a lucrative arrangement with certain Yuan-ti slavers based in the Underways of Oeble (see encounter 3, below). Duskar and his daughters discreetly capture lone travelers passing through Essembra and other humanoids not likely to be missed and send them to Oeble via the *portal* beneath Adderposts. In exchange, the yuan-ti send him urns of mordayn powder that is made in the Black Jungles and shipped northward via Lushpool.

Duskar deliberately avoids selling mordayn powder to local Battledarrans for fear that its presence would draw too much attention from the local authorities. Instead, he reserves it for out-of-town patrons who know of its availability. Sembian agents of the yuan-ti posing as decadent scions of the merchant nobility frequently recommend that their fellows pay a quick visit to Adderposts for a bit of mordayn powder. Thereafter, they exploit the drug's effects and the ensuing addictions to extend their control of Sembian trade activities.

Duskar Flamehaern: Male Chondathan human adept 7 of Sss'thasine'ss (Talona); CR 6; Medium humanoid; HD 7d6+7; hp 31; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +3; Grp +2; Atk +5 melee (1d4–1/19–20, dagger) or +6 ranged (1d8+1/19–20, *+1 light crossbow*); Full Atk +5 melee (1d4–1/19–20, dagger) or +6 ranged (1d8+1/19–20, *+1 light crossbow*); AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +3, Bluff +4, Concentration +5, Diplomacy +6, Profession (shopkeeper) +3, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +1, Spot +4; Armor Proficiency (light), Blooded, Negotiator, Weapon Finesse.

Adept Spells Prepared (3/4/3; save DC 12 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, guidance, touch of fatigue;* 1st—*burning hands, command, cure light wounds, protection from good;* 2nd—*bull's strength, mirror image, web.*

Possessions: +2 leather armor, +1 light crossbow, 30 bolts, dagger, 2 *potions of cure light wounds, potion of darkvision, potion of undetectable alignment.*

ESVELE, LHAREENE, AND ROWAN FLAMEHAERN

Duskar's three daughters are tall, thin, beautiful women with black curly hair that almost sweeps the floor when they unbind it. Rumor holds that all three are excellent forgers and limners who can paint holes, nailheads, and seams where none exist, and only the closest examination can uncover the deceit. In truth, all three women have been converted into tainted ones to serve the yuan-ti, and they are even more ruthless than their father. The three often lure amorous travelers into situations in which a bit of drugged wine can lead to easy robbery at best and a quick introduction to slavery at worst.

Esvele, Lhareene, and Rowan Flamehaern: Female Chondathan human tainted one rogue 5; CR 6; Medium humanoid; HD 5d6+10; hp 27; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +3; Grp +2; Atk +3 melee (1d6/19–20, *+1 short sword*) or +5 melee (1d4–1/19–20, dagger); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6/19–20, *+1 short sword*) or +5 melee (1d4–1/19–20, dagger); SA poison kiss, psionics, sneak attack +3d6; SQ evasion, immunity to poison (snake venom only), spell resistance 14, trap sense +1, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +3; Str 8, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +11, Bluff +10, Craft (painting) +14, Diplomacy +14, Escape Artist +10, Forgery +9, Intimidate +4, Listen +10, Sense Motive +8, Sleight of Hand +12, Spot +10; Alertness, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Craft [painting]), Weapon Finesse.

Relocating the Adventure

Adderposts can easily be placed in any large town or city north or east of the Border Kingdoms. The location should make sense as the first stage of a slaving route that leads into the depths of the Black Jungles and have a ready market for the drug known as dreammist.

Poison Kiss (Ex): While grappling, a daughter of Duskar can choose to smear her opponent with poisonous saliva instead of dealing damage. This poison "kiss" can be used only while grappling a foe with exposed skin. The daughter makes an opposed grapple check instead of an attack and takes a –4 penalty on the check. If she wins, she successfully applies the poison (contact, Fortitude DC 14, initial and secondary damage 1d4 Con) by kissing, licking, or lightly biting her opponent.

Psionics (Sp): 3/day—*polymorph* (snake or snakelike form only); 1/day—*poison* (DC 14). Caster level 5th.

Possessions: +2 leather armor, +1 short sword, dagger, masterwork artisan's tools, *ring of protection +1,* 3 *potions of cure light wounds*, 23 gp.

SSENSARIITH

Hatched near the head of the Nagaflow, Ssensariith wandered south and west upon reaching maturity and eventually settled in the Border Kingdoms. Several decades ago, it was involved in a legendary altercation known as the Night of Seven Nagas that unfolded in the Underways of Oeble. During that battle, Ssensariith survived the concerted attacks of two iridescent nagas by stumbling through a *portal* that led to a series of long-buried catacombs beneath the Battledarran town of Essembra.

Ssensariith spent many years discovering all the secrets of its new home and establishing itself as a local drug and slave kingpin in the heart of the Dalelands. Today, it leads a small band of human and once-human followers in Essembra, who venerate it as the divine incarnation of Sss'thasine'ss. (In truth, both the naga and its followers worship a minor aspect of Talona.)

Content to let Duskar Flamehaern lead the day-to-day activities of the cult, Ssensariith spends most of its time attempting to develop gems that "hatch" as though they were eggs to release any of several magical varieties of serpent. The naga spends the bulk of the offerings it receives from the cult on rare ingredients for its research, but so far it has had no success. Should the spirit naga succeed, however, it would control a new and potentially lucrative trade item of great interest to serpentfolk throughout Faerûn.

Ssensariith: Spirit naga cleric 3 of Sss'thasine'ss (Talona)/ mystic wanderer 3; CR 15; Large aberration; HD 9d8+36 plus 3d8+12 plus 3d8+12; hp 127; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +9; Grp +17; Atk +12 melee (2d6+6 plus poison, bite); Full Atk +12 melee (2d6+6 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA charming gaze, poison, rebuke undead 7/day (+4, 2d6+7, 3rd), *sleep*, spells; SQ darkvision 60 ft., familiar benefits, gem magic, glory of the divine, lore of nature, resist charm; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +10, Will +17; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 17, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +7, Concentration +10, Craft (alchemy) +4, Diplomacy +12, Heal +5, Hide –3, Knowledge (nature) +6, Listen +9, Perform (dance) +7, Profession (herbalist) +10, Spellcraft +5, Spot +9; Ability Focus (charming gaze), Alertness, Attune Gem, Combat Casting, Eschew Materials, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Tail Rattle.

Charming Gaze (Su): Ssensariith's gaze affects all creatures within 30 feet as a *charm person* spell (Will DC 22 negates).

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 18, initial and secondary damage 1d8 Con.

***Sleep* (Sp)**: Ssensariith can use *sleep* (caster level 6th; save DC 18) once per day.

Spells: Ssensariith can cast spells as a 10th-level sorcerer and can cast spells from the cleric spell list and from the Chaos and Evil domains as arcane spells.

Familiar Benefits: Ssensariith gains the benefit of the Alertness feat and a +3 bonus on Bluff checks when his familiar is within 5 feet. He also gains an empathic link with his familiar, the ability to share spells with his familiar, and the ability to have his familiar deliver touch spells for him.

Gem Magic (Su): Ssensariith knows the secret of gem magic and gains Attune Gem as a bonus feat.

Glory of the Divine (Su): Ssensariith gains a +4 profane bonus to AC (already figured into the statistics above).

Lore of Nature: Ssensariith gains a +2 competence bonus on all Profession (herbalist) and Knowledge (nature) checks (already figured into the statistics above).

Resist Charm: Ssensariith gains a +2 profane bonus on saving throws against enchantment (charm) effects.

Cleric Spells Prepared (4/4/3; save DC 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, mending, resistance;* 1st—*cause fear, cure light wounds, protection from good*, shield of faith;* 2nd—*bull's strength, desecrate*, hold person.*

*Domain spell. Deity: Sss'thasine'ss (Talona). Domains: Chaos (cast chaos spells at +1 caster level), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/7/7/6/3; save DC 14 + spell level): 0—*acid splash, detect magic, detect poison, Horizikaul's cough*†, light, mage hand, open/close, ray of frost, read magic;* 1st—*alarm, Horizikaul's boom*†, mage armor, magic missile, Tenser's floating disk;* 2nd—*darkness, detect thoughts, eagle's splendor, summon swarm;* 3rd—*dispel magic, protection from energy, suggestion;* 4th—*shout†, stoneskin;* 5th—*cloudkill.*

*See *Magic of Faerûn.*

†Because of Tail Rattle, the base DC for saves against these spells is 16 + spell level.

Possessions: Amulet of mind shielding (treat as *ring of mind shielding*), *cloak of resistance +1, circlet of persuasion, ioun stone* (pink and green sphere).

Ssensariith's Familiar: Male tiny viper familiar; CR —; Tiny magical beast; HD 1/4 d8; hp 63; Init +3; Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 15 ft.; AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +9; Grp –2; Atk +14 melee (1–3 plus poison, bite); Full Atk +14 melee (1–3 plus poison, bite); Space/Reach 2-1/2 ft./0 ft.; SA poison; SQ darkvision 60 ft., improved evasion, low-light vision, scent; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +13; Str 4, Dex 17, Con 11, Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 2.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Climb +11, Concentration +6, Craft (alchemy) +1, Diplomacy +4, Hide +15, Listen +11, Perform –1, Spot +11, Swim +5; Weapon Finesse.

Poison (Ex): Injury, Fortitude DC 10, initial and secondary damage 1d6 Con.

Hendar "Swordshatter" Lhorghin

Hendar is a member of the Lord's Men, a small group of men-at-arms based in Essembra and led by War Chancellor Ilmeth (LN male Chondathan human fighter 11). Hendar has long been friends with Duskar Flamehaern and was the first convert to the Cult of Sss'thasine'ss outside the Flamehaern family.

Hendar ensures that the Lord's Men turn a blind eye to the ongoing illegal activities at Adderposts. In exchange, Duskar enriches his friend with a steady stream of coin, which he promptly loses gambling and wenching.

Adventurers investigating Adderposts are unlikely to encounter Hendar unless they interrupt an actual worship ceremony.

Hendar "Swordshatter" Lhorghin: Male Vaasan human fighter 5; CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 5d10+10; hp 37; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +5; Grp +8; Atk +9 melee (2d6+4/19–20, masterwork greatsword) or +7 ranged (1d6+3/×3, masterwork composite shortbow [+3 Str bonus]); Full Atk +9 melee (2d6+4/19–20, masterwork greatsword) or +7 ranged (1d6+3/×3, masterwork composite shortbow); AL CN; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +3, Intimidate +7, Ride +9; Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Sunder, Power Attack.

Possessions: Full plate armor, heavy steel shield, masterwork greatsword, masterwork composite shortbow (+3 Str bonus), 20 arrows, quiver, 2,150 gp.

Dhessa o' the Fish

Dhessa is an aging tavern wench at the Four Flying Fish and, of late, the sometimes lover of Duskar Flamehaern. Dhessa was the second convert to the Cult of Sss'thasine'ss outside of Duskar's family. Although she was initially reluctant, she has enthusiastically embraced the cult's teachings in recent weeks. Dhessa keeps an ear to the ground in the Four Flying Fish, listening for information of interest to the cult.

Adventurers investigating Adderposts are unlikely to encounter Dhessa unless they interrupt an actual worship service.

Dhessa o' the Fish: Female Chondathan human commoner 3; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 3d4; hp 7; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +1; Grp +0; Atk +2 melee (1d4–1/19–20, dagger); Full Atk +2 melee (1d4–1/19–20, dagger); AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Craft (cooking) +6, Listen +4, Profession (innkeeper) +7, Spot +4; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Simple Weapon Proficiency (dagger), Weapon Finesse.

Possessions: Dagger.

1. Adderposts

This rectangular building is constructed of mortared stone and has a sloping slate roof. A trio of steps leads up to stout double doors, flanked by the serpentine-carved, spiraling door pillars for which the shop is named.

1A. Shop

This section of Adderposts was once the main room of the old temple.

> The shop portion of Adderposts consists of a large main room heaped with assorted merchandise, including a fascinating jumble of old masks and some pieces of armor heaped up in huge pails. Four sets of rickety stairs ascend to overhead chambers. Lamps dangle in profusion from bars that can be lowered by means of pulleys, and clothes hang on shoulder racks from every tread of the various ascending stairs.

Adderposts is the place to come if you need something in a hurry—particularly a disguise that involves a certain type of armor or uniform. Duskar stocks specimens of every sort of military garb from the Moonsea and Dragon Reach lands.

Only Duskar can quickly find anything in the chaos of his shop, but he knows where everything is. Browsers who pick up merchandise, carry it around for a while, and then set it down elsewhere absolutely enrage him.

Duskar has a unique system for foiling thieves, at least as far as cash is concerned. He pours the coins that he takes in payment into one of a dozen or so speaking tubes standing against pillars here and there around the shop, and these in turn funnel their contents down to unknown regions below. Change is brought to customers by one of Duskar's daughters. Thus, any coinage in the shop proper is in the possession of customers.

1B. Duskar's Bedroom

Accessible only via a rickety stair leading up the west end of the north wall, Duskar's bedroom contains a large bed and chest, as well as many items that once belonged to his late wife. The secretive proprietor is careful to store nothing incriminating here. This chamber connects with his daughter's rooms via the topside of the shop's uneven plank ceiling.

1C. Esvele's Bedroom

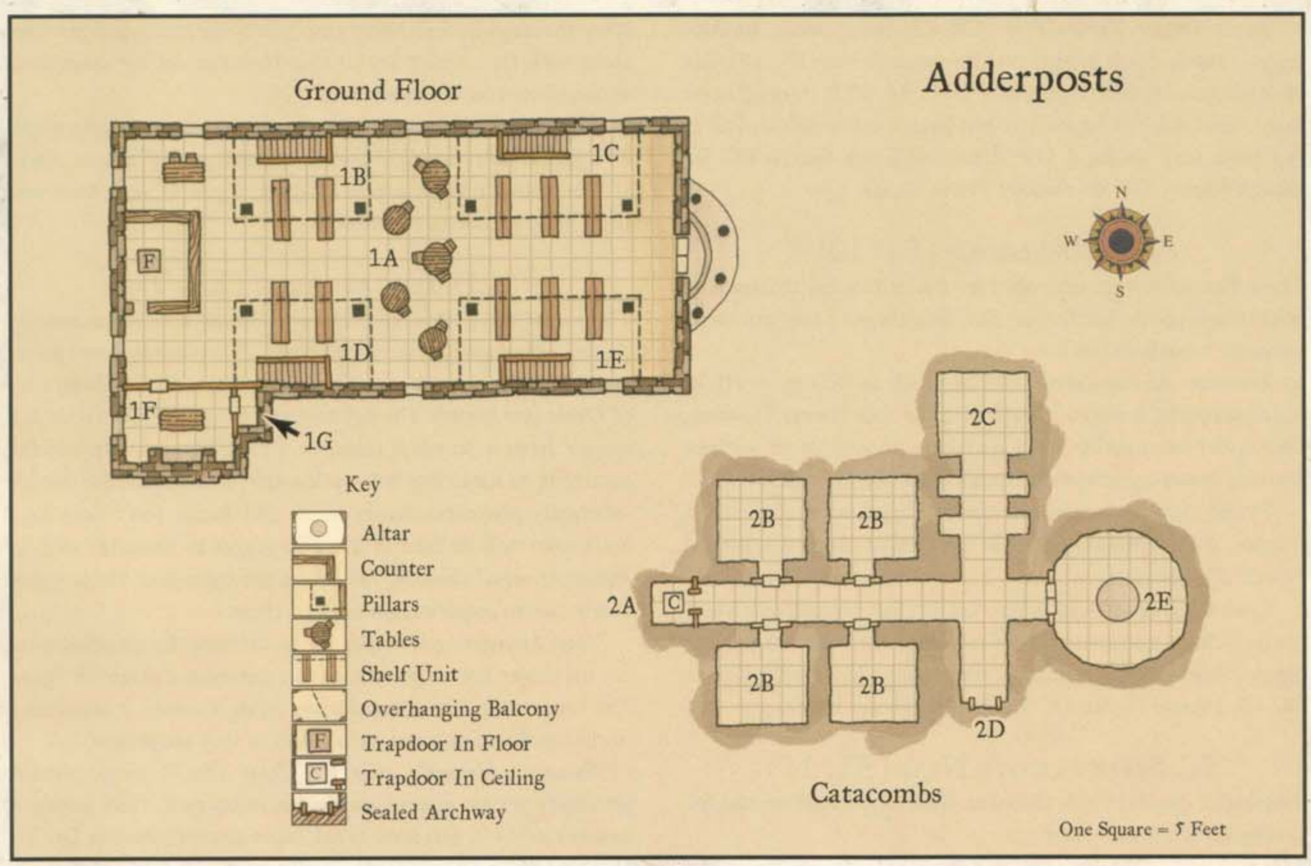
A rickety stair leads up the east end of the north wall to this chamber. Esvele's bedroom contains a narrow bed and a chest with a false bottom (Search DC 20).

Treasure: The niche thus concealed hides a small collection of jewelry (worth a total of 69 gp) that Esvele has stolen from travelers passing through town.

1D. Lhareene's Bedroom

Lhareene's bedroom is furnished in a fashion similar to those of her sisters. It is accessible by the same sort of rickety stairway, which leads up the west end of the south wall.

Hidden behind the headboard of the bed is a small, leather-bound tome that serves as Lhareene's diary. In it, she records the name of every man she seduces, including those that she later dispatches through the *portal* to Oeble. PCs who are searching for someone abducted into slavery by the cult may find the name herein.



1E. ROWAN'S BEDROOM

Like her sisters' chambers, Rowan's bedroom contains a bed and a chest. The rickety staircase that leads up to it is at the east end of the south wall.

Unbeknownst to her father or sisters, Esvele has become addicted to dreammist. She hides a small stash of mordayn powder (2 doses, worth 200 gp each) wrapped in the glossy leaves of some exotic southern tree beneath her mattress.

1F. KITCHEN

This room was added long after Adderposts was constructed. It features a large hearth, plenty of cooking implements, a table for food preparation and dining, several chairs, and a variety of foodstuffs. The only oddity is a cage filled with mice, which reflects the newfound penchant for living rodents evinced by Duskar's daughters since their transformation into tainted ones.

1G. GARDEROBE

Duskar and his daughters perform their daily ablutions in this small chamber.

2. catacombs of sss'thasine'ss

The catacombs beneath Adderposts once served as the undercroft and private chapel for the temple above. All the corridors in this area are fashioned of hewn stone blocks, which have been artfully set to create an arching roof between 10 and 12 feet high. All the doors here are strong wooden ones, but none are locked.

2A. NARTHEX (EL 13)

This small, 10-foot-cube served as the narthex for the temple. Read or paraphrase the following when the characters approach.

> This small, cubic chamber is built of hewn stone blocks. In the ceiling is a trapdoor, and an archway in the east wall leads into darkness. The floor is tiled with a mosaic depicting a swarm of scorpions, snakes, and spiders. Runes are carved into the other three walls.

The trapdoor in the ceiling leads into the Adderposts shop (area 1A), emerging just behind the counter. The archway leads into the rest of the catacombs. The runes on the walls are in Draconic, and they read, "The Serpent Never Sleeps."

Trap: Anyone standing on the floor of the narthex triggers a trap that fills the room with poisonous gas. Ssensariith and the cultists are aware of the trap and get past it with a hidden switch bypass located high up on the north wall, where it is reachable from either entryway to the narthex. In addition, the spirit naga usually casts *alarm* centered on the top of the archway to warn it when guests (welcome or not) arrive. The spell's radius is sufficient to alert the naga to the presence of customers in the store above as well.

Burnt Othur Vapor Trap: CR 13; mechanical; location trigger; repair reset; hidden switch bypass (Search DC 25); gas; multiple targets (all targets in a 10 ft. by 10 ft. room); never miss; onset delay (1 round); poison (burnt othur fumes; DC 18 Fortitude save resists, 1 Con drain/3d6 Con); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30. *Market Price:* 21,100 gp.

2B. STOREROOMS (EL 10)

These chambers were once used by the cult of Sss'thasine'ss to hold temple goods, but Duskar now uses them to hold purloined goods he intends to fence.

Treasure: At any given time, as much as 800 gp worth of stolen property is stored in each of these four rooms. However, such items are usually bulky and hard to dispose of without drawing unwanted attention from the local authorities.

Buried amidst the junk in the southeast room is a small, trapped coffer containing eight packets of mordayn powder (worth 200 gp each).

Lock Covered in Dragon Bile: CR 10; mechanical; touch trigger (attached); no reset; lock bypass (Open Lock DC 30); poison (dragon bile, DC 26 Fortitude save resists, 3d6 Str/0); Search DC 30; Disable Device DC 30. *Market Price:* 14,400 gp.

2C. SSENSARIITH'S NEST (EL 15)

Ssensariith dwells in this chamber. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs enter.

> This 20-foot square chamber contains all manner of debris, arranged in the fashion of a large nest.

The junk on the floor gives cover to anyone who crouches down behind it. Moreover, anyone attempting to navigate the room can do so only at normal speed and must make a Balance check (DC 5) each round to make progress.

Creature: This nest is home to the spirit naga Ssensariith, who spends most of its time here experimenting with magical processes.

Ssensariith: See Major NPCs section, above.

Tactics: If Ssensariith has received warning of the PCs' presence from its *alarm* spell or by any other means, it prepares for the encounter by casting *detect thoughts, darkness, protection from energy (fire),* and *mage armor.* Then it hides behind the debris in the room to gain cover. When the PCs enter, the naga uses its *sleep* ability first, followed by a *suggestion* that they turn around and leave. If these tactics fail to get rid of the intruders, it uses its charming gaze on one and tries to make that character defend it. When Ssensariith joins combat, it leads off with *magic missile,* then uses *cloudkill* and its other offensive spells to best advantage. If forced into melee, the naga uses its poisonous bite. If Ssensariith is losing the battle, it flees toward the *portal* and tries to escape to Oeble.

Development: If captured, the naga pretends to be just another cultist and tries to convince the PCs to go through the *portal* arch (area 2D) after the leader of the cult. It lies about the key to ensure that the PCs trip the trap if they seem inclined to leave the naga behind; otherwise it tells the truth and provides them with the correct key so that they can deliver themselves to the slavers on the other end.

Treasure: Hidden in and among the detritus are gems worth 500 gp in total, plus eight attuned gems (a *gem of alarm,* a *gem of Horizikaul's boom,* a *gem of shout,* a *gem of suggestion,* and three *gems of summon swarm.*

2D. PORTAL ARCH (EL 7)

The *portal* to Oeble is an archway filled in with stone and engraved with vaguely serpentine glyphs. This two-way keyed *portal* connects the catacombs beneath Adderposts with the Underways of Oeble (see below). The key required for passage to Oeble is a stinger from a scorpion (dead or alive). The key required for returning to Essembra is a rattlesnake rattle (which Ssensariith inherently possesses, thanks to its Tail Rattle feat). Both keys are known only to Ssensariith, who guards its thoughts with its *amulet of mind shielding,* although the yuan-ti of Oeble would dearly like to acquire knowledge of them.

Trap: Attempting to employ the *portal* from this direction without the proper key triggers a trap that summons a swarm of vipers. The summoned swarm attacks any living creature it encounters (including Ssensariith and its followers, if they are present).

Summon Nature's Ally VI **Trap**: CR 7; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effect (*summon nature's ally VI,* 6th-level druid, viper swarm); Search DC 31; Disable Device DC 31. *Cost:* 38,900 gp, 3,112 XP.

Viper Swarm (1): hp 27; see *Fiend Folio* page 172.

2E. CHAPEL OF SSS'THASINE'SS (EL 13)

This chamber is the main worship area for the cult.

> This round chamber has a slightly concave roof and floor. Lifelike depictions of writhing serpents, scuttling spiders, and fierce-looking scorpions have been carved into the walls, floor, and ceiling. In the center of the chamber stands a stone altar carved in the shape of a coiled serpent with its head tilted back and its jaws opened impossibly wide. Several misshapen reptilian creatures stand guard to either side of the altar.

A successful DC 15 Spot check reveals that many of the carved serpents seem to collectively assume a humanoid form. The serpent's mouth forms a wide, flat bowl large enough to hold the body of a Medium creature, and its throat is a narrow tube that drains blood from sacrifices. If Sss'thasine'ss (Talona) is pleased with a sacrifice, the response is typically a swarm of centipedes, spiders, or vipers that pours forth from the serpent's throat into the bowl. The swarm then acts at the behest of the person who offered the sacrifice. (See the *Book of Vile Darkness* for more details about sacrifices to dark gods.)

Creatures: The altar is guarded by sixteen broodguards. One of these was once Duskar's wife, who is thought to have died of a wasting disease by most Essembrans. The other was a lone traveler "recruited" as a guinea pig to test the distillation of yuan-ti venom, herbs, and roots supplied by the yuan-ti of Oeble for creating tainted ones.

If the PCs are searching for an NPC and you want to end the adventure here, this latter broodguard is that missing NPC. Otherwise, assume the person they seek was sent on to Oeble as a slave.

Broodguards (16): hp 26, 26, 25, 25, 24, 24, 23, 23, 22, 22, 22, 20, 20, 19, 19, 19; see *Monsters of Faerûn,* page 96.

Treasure: Several dark relics used in dark rituals sit atop the altar. They include a snakeskin bag containing religious scripture affixed to a leather cord (a *phylactery of faithfulness*) and an ebony dagger with a serrated edge (a *+1 dagger*).

2F. COLLAPSED TUNNEL

This tunnel once continued on to the east, but it has since collapsed. If you want to expand the adventure, this tunnel could lead to heretofore undiscovered vaults which might contain additional treasures of the cult, undead remains of the long-vanished cultists, or even the mummified remains of one or more sarrukh.

3. oeble

Oeble-town is located near the center of the Border Kingdoms, straddling the River Scelptar west of the Qurth Forest. Home to all manner of rogues, outlaws, and folk unwelcome elsewhere, the city's multiracial populace includes a Yuan-ti ssrath (lesser tribe, see Chapter 1) of House Eselema. The serpentfolk dwell in the Underways of Oeble—an ever-growing labyrinth of passageways beneath Oeble-town that is home to most of the "monsters that reside in the city.

Members of the ssrath traffic in slaves, shipping them south to the Eselemas tribal lands in the southern Black Jungles via Lushpool. They also deal in mordayn powder, shipping it to agents across Faerûn to further the schemes of House Eselemas.

One source of slaves is the two-way *portal* linking Essembra (specifically the catacombs of Adderposts) with Oeble. The southern terminus of this *portal* opens in a deserted cul-de-sac of the Underways near the subterranean tavern known as the Talondance. The yuan-ti keep a close eye on the *portal* so that they can quickly round up any slaves from Essembra.

Inspiration regarding Oeble and its resident Yuan-ti ssrath may be found in *The Black Bouquet,* by Richard Lee Byers.

sarrukh ruin

Sarrukh Ruin is a short adventure designed for 7th-level characters that can be placed anywhere within Faerûn. The season, time of year, and the weather are irrelevant, since the majority of the adventure is subterranean.

background

In their search for living sarrukh, the khaastas have unearthed dozens of ancient ruins from the old empire. Occasionally, such efforts have revealed a few living sarrukh, deep in hibernation, which the khaastas have immediately slain. In most cases, however, the ruins are simply empty.

Though the khaastas normally try not to interfere with natives of Faerûn, they tend to be overzealous about defending sarrukh ruins that have not yet been fully explored. Recently, a small expeditionary force of khaastas unearthed this location, and its members are presently working to unravel the secrets that it holds.

Once a sarrukh outpost, this settlement has long since been abandoned. Within its ruins, however, are items that are worth a fortune if salvaged. Furthermore, an immense, four-sided, gray obelisk at the center of the settlement is a two-way, keyed *portal* to any plane specified by the creature that activates it. The sarrukh once used this *portal* as a means of exploring the multiverse. Such a device could prove invaluable to the khaastas, making them less reliant upon the charity of their demonic allies for planar transport.

adventure synopsis

The khaastas assume that any creatures in this area, including Scaleless Ones, are working with the sarrukh and have valuable knowledge about their whereabouts. Thus, they attempt to capture the PCs as soon as they notice the intrusion and torture information out of them. Should the PCs prove difficult to capture, the khaastas have no qualms about killing them instead.

The party can interact with the khaastas in a number of ways. They could simply drive the creatures away, acquire the relics they have unearthed from the sarrukh settlement, and then deal with the obelisk, or they could enter the ruins by stealth, disable the obelisk, and return without engaging the khaastas in combat.

Though the PCs may not realize it, the most important element of this adventure is keeping the khaastas from gaining access to the power of the obelisk. Thus far, the reach of these aggressive and militant creatures has been largely limited by their inability to access other planes easily. A *portal* such as this one that provides access to nearly any plane in the multiverse would transform them into a major threat. The khaastas realize the probable function of this device, so more will be sent if this force is slain or driven off. Destroying the obelisk provides a much safer way to contain the threat.

beginning the adventure

From the surface, the ruins appear as nothing more than a rather large, foliage-covered hill. Originally, this underground settlement could be reached only via a tunnel leading from a system of caves that begins a mile away. But a long-ago earthquake collapsed a vital tunnel connection, cutting off that access route. Now only a deep hole recently dug into the top of the hill by the khaastas provides access to the entrance cavern. The adventure begins when the PCs discover this hole.

THE SETTLEMENT

The PCs should be able to move around freely as long as they take care to minimize the noise they make. Because khaastas fight amongst themselves periodically, minor disturbances do not immediately alarm the khaasta leader. A significant amount of noise, however, causes him to dispatch four khaastas to investigate the disturbance.

Because they have been sheltered from looters and the elements, the structures within the hill have been well preserved. Most are two-room dwellings made of stone, their outer walls decorated with carved images of intertwined snakes or upright, walking serpents. The average house still contains 1d8 works of art, statues, rugs, or other ornaments of value (DM's choice), each worth 3d20 gp on the open market, or twice that amount to anyone interested in antiquities.

1. Entrance (EL 5)

The entrance hole is partially concealed by foliage from anyone more than 20 feet away, but the two khaasta guards can be spotted normally.

> Two scaly creatures resembling human-sized lizards stand atop this hill, their eyes scanning the horizon.

Creatures: The two khaastas on guard on the hilltop are assigned to alert their comrades below to any potential intrusion as well as to defend the entrance.

Khaastas (2): hp 19, 21; see *Fiend Folio* page 115.

Tactics: Unless first silenced, one of the khaastas barks a warning into the hole, then rushes to attack the party. If outnumbered, the two are happy to fight the first party members that approach them.

If one of the khaastas falls in combat, or if they both fall below one-half their original hit points, or if the battle lasts more than 4 rounds, one guard drops a gong into the chamber below, alerting those within to imminent enemy penetration. Should this alarm sound, the khaastas stationed within the ruins move to reinforce the area around the entrance and ready themselves for combat.

Development: Once the guards have been defeated, the PCs can enter the ruins. The entry hole is 5 feet in diameter and extends 15 feet down through the earth before opening into a large, dark cavern. The spot marked "1" on the map is the point on the cavern floor (200 feet below) that is directly underneath the entrance. Since this spot lies slightly behind the main portion of the ruins, only the khaastas in areas 2 and 3 are permitted Spot checks to notice the party descending.

2. Large Residence (EL 6)

The khaastas have been using this house as a guardpost to watch the entrance hole and the nearby tunnel.

> This structure appears to be a larger version of the standard stone residences within these ruins. The exterior of the building is made of dark-colored stone and decorated with prominent engravings of snakes and other lizards.

Creatures: Three khaastas stand guard outside this sarrukh residence. Because the group has been exploring this ruin for the better part of a week without incident, the guards here have grown lax. Thus, unless the characters draw attention to themselves in some way, these khaastas detect them only with a successful DC 20 Spot check.

Khaastas (3): hp 19, 20, 25; see *Fiend Folio* page 115.

Tactics: The guards are initially disorganized and simply attack the first PCs they can engage. If they survive more than 2 rounds, they seek to gain support by withdrawing to the nearest position controlled by other khaastas.

Development: This structure encompasses more than 3,000 square feet in six large rooms. The valuables have already been looted and brought to area 5.

3. Fountain (EL 5)

This plaza once served as a public gathering place for the sarrukh.

> Water trickles from a vaguely humanoid-shaped fountain encrusted with layer upon layer of rock-hard minerals in the center of this stone plaza. Stone benches and purple phosphorescent clumps of fungus surround the fountain in an artful array. Two bipedal, lizardlike creatures stand guard over the plaza.

Creatures: The two khaastas stationed here attack anyone approaching them.

Khaastas (2): hp 20, 22; see *Fiend Folio* page 115.

Tactics: If these guards were not previously aware of the party, they immediately withdraw to area 5. If they have already received warning of imminent invasion, they try to lure the characters to area 4 by taking a circuitous route that leads through there and eventually ends up in area 5.

Development: Despite the fact that the sarrukh have not been active here for more than 30,000 years, this fountain continues to pump water. Mineral deposits have formed a hard crust over the marble serpent statue, making it impossible to discern its original form. The pool that the water flows into has fared much better than the statue, as have the benches that encircle the fountain. The water is potable and possesses no magical or otherwise unusual properties.

Treasure: The mineral-covered statue is crafted of white marble. Although it weighs 500 pounds, it would fetch 2,000 gp on the open market or twice that amount from anyone interested in antiquities.

4. Thief's Trap (EL 12)

As the dominant creatures in their various kingdoms, the sarrukh gathered more treasure than most and thus were often victims of theft. To protect themselves against larceny, they often set tantalizing traps, such as this one.

> This stone-and-mortar building is twice as tall as it is wide. Some 30 feet above the ground is a section that is open on all sides, save for the corner columns supporting the roof. Within this space rests what appears to be an emerald the size of the average human's head. Rays of light glint from it in all directions.

The building is 20 feet long, 20 feet wide, and 40 feet tall, built of stacked and mortared stones. Approximately 30 feet above the ground is an open area shaded by a sloped roof that is supported by four thick columns, one in each corner. Within this open area is a *silent image* depicting a green gem the size of a human's head. The ray of light that shines through the gem is part of the illusion.

Trap: *Walls of force* springs into existence between each pair of pillars 1 round after any creature enters the open chamber. A rukanyr is summoned into the area 1d4 rounds later. The *walls of force* remain in place until either the invader or the rukanyr is slain.

***Wall of Force/Summon Monster VIII* Trap:** CR 12; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; multiple traps (six *wall of force* traps and one *summon monster VIII* trap that summons a rukanyr); spell effect (*wall of force,* 15th-level wizard); spell effect (*summon monster VIII,* 15th-level wizard, rukanyr); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC 34. Cost 83,500 gp, 6,680 XP.

Note: This trap is really six traps that create *walls of force* and a seventh trap that summons a rukanyr in the same area. If all succeed, the rukanyr appears inside the ring of *walls of force.* These effects are independent of each other.

Rukanyr: hp 85; see *Fiend Folio* page 144.

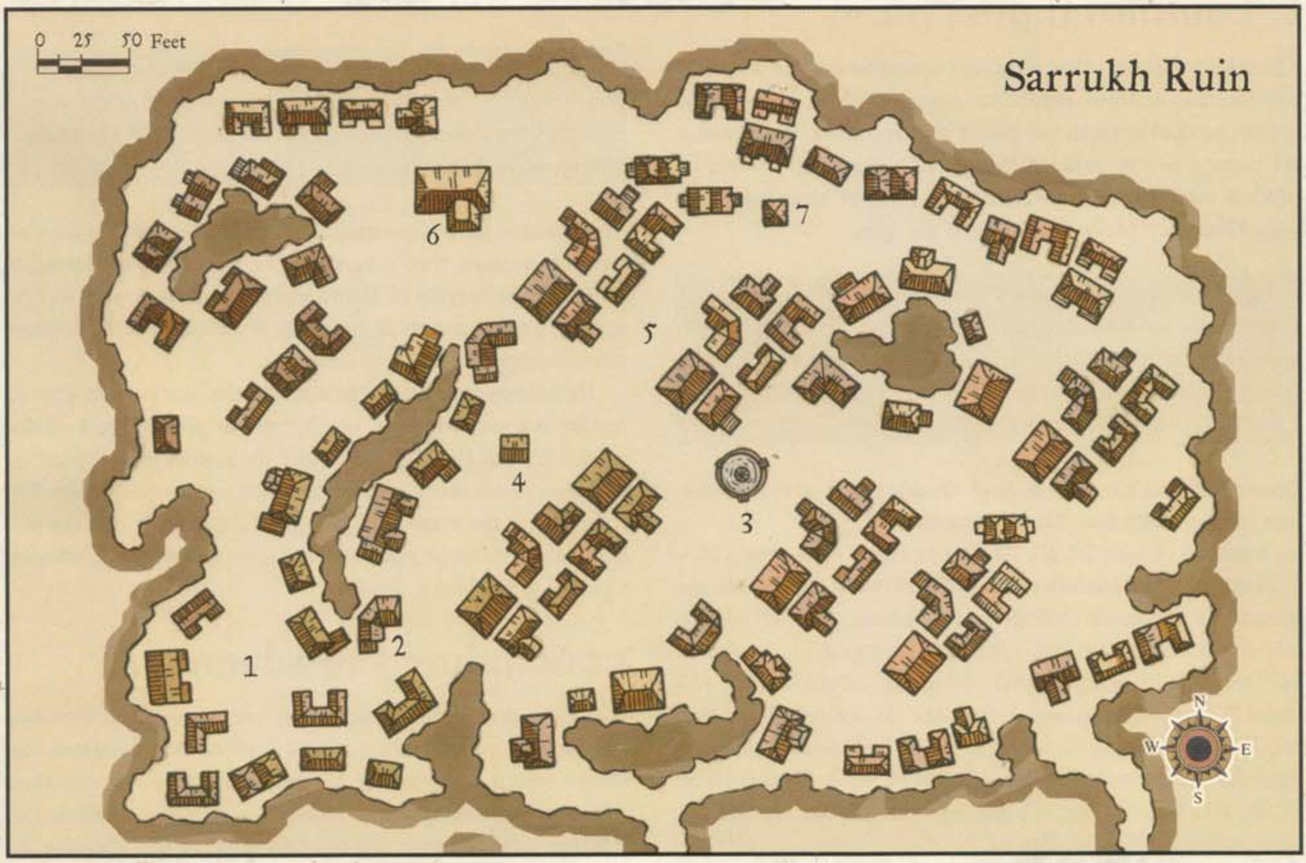
Tactics: Regardless of the opponents it faces, the rukanyr begins combat with a sundering roar and then concentrates its initial attacks on any creatures not affected by it. If forced to choose between targets, it attacks anyone who appears to be a spellcaster in preference to others.

Development: The chamber is empty aside from the horribly mutilated bodies of two khaastas that tripped the trap during their investigation of the site.

5. Loot (EL 7)

The goods already salvaged from many of the sarrukh dwellings have been piled up here.

> A pile of gold and other assorted items stands in this open area. Four scaly creatures stand guard around the pile.



The khaastas keep their treasure far from the command post to limit access to it. Such an arrangement helps to keep the more valuable items from disappearing before the treasure can be evenly divided.

Creatures: The pile of loot is guarded by four khaastas with orders to attack any creatures (including other khaastas) that come closer than 20 feet. Depending on the PCs' actions up to this point, the guards from area 3 may also be here.

Khaastas (4): hp 18, 22, 22, 26; see *Fiend Folio* page 115.

Tactics: Because they consider melee combat to be the most glorious way to fight a battle, the khaastas here engage other melee combatants before spellcasters. If any spell obviously affects more than half their number, however, they attempt to bring down the spellcaster immediately, provoking attacks of opportunity if necessary.

Development: If the battle turns against them, the khaastas attempt to withdraw to area 6.

Treasure: The pile of treasure consists of 1,250 gp in coins, a finely wrought small gold bracelet (25 gp), a carved bone statuette in the shape of a sarrukh (250 gp), a silver comb set with moonstones (10 gp), vestments with cloth made of gold (700 gp), a solid gold snake idol (500 gp), a harp carved from exotic wood, inlaid with ivory and set with zircon gems (1,500 gp), a gold cup set with emeralds (50 gp), a fire opal pendant on a fine gold chain (75 gp), and a silver chalice set with emeralds and rubies (50 gp).

6. command post (EL 9)

The twenty khaastas that embarked upon this mission are using this location as their command center. While it might make greater tactical sense to use one of the structures, the khaastas are accustomed to outdoor living and believe that remaining inside a structure decreases their awareness of their surroundings. Thus, they prefer to remain in the open.

> Three campfires form a tight triangle just outside a particularly large building. Around them lie twenty bedrolls and a collection of general supplies, including the carcasses of two slain deer, firewood, five bullseye lanterns that are currently unlit, five shovels, and two large buckets.

Creatures: Rakh'til, the 4th-level khaasta cleric who leads this party, is here with four khaasta guards.

Khaastas (4): hp 19, 20, 22, 25; see *Fiend Folio* page 115.

Rakh'til: Male khaasta cleric 4 of Sess'innek; CR 7; Medium monstrous humanoid (extraplanar, reptilian); HD 3d8+6 plus 4d8+8; hp 45; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 28, touch 13, flat-footed 26; Base Atk +6; Grp +10; Atk +10 melee (1d4+4, bite) or +12 melee (1d8+6, *+2 heavy mace*); Full Atk +10 melee (1d4+4, bite) or +12/+7 melee (1d8+6, *+2 heavy mace*) and +5 melee (1d4+2, bite); SA rebuke undead 3/day (+0, 2d6+4, 4th); SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +8; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +6, Handle Animal +3, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (religion) +5, Knowledge (the planes) +4, Ride +5, Spellcraft +5, Spot +4, Survival +4; Point Blank Shot, Power Attack, Scribe Scroll.

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/5/3; save DC 11 + spell level): 0—*create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, purify food and drink, read magic;* 1st—*cause fear, cure light wounds, divine favor, protection from good*, shield of faith;* 2nd—*desecrate*, lesser restoration, undetectable alignment.*

*Domain spell. Deity: Sess'innek. Domains: Chaos (cast chaos spells at +1 caster level), Evil (cast evil spells at +1 caster level).

Possessions: +2 breastplate, +1 light steel shield, +2 heavy mace, ring of protection +1, backpack, waterskin, bedroll, flint and steel, holy symbol, 10 torches, 179 gp.

Tactics: When the PCs approach, the guards engage them in melee combat while Rakh'til casts *cause fear*. The next round, Rakh'til casts *protection from good* if his fellow khaastas seem to be holding their own, or enters the fray otherwise. His preferred targets are enemy spellcasters. If he can remain out of combat, he concentrates on curing wounded khaastas and using his other spells to advantage.

Development: Should the party win this battle, any remaining khaastas in the area promptly leave if given the chance. The PCs can then move about the ruins unmolested.

7. Rak'ha'naali obelisk

The obelisk stands unguarded at the center of the sarrukh ruins.

> An immense, four-sided obelisk carved out of gray stone rises some 60 feet from the cavern floor. All four sides slope toward the center, coming to a point at the top. The stone appears absolutely featureless.

The khaastas have investigated the obelisk, but have so far they can only surmise that it functions as a *portal*. They intend to return to the Barrens of Doom and Despair and report its existence to their superiors so that they can dispatch some demonic allies to investigate it.

Development: The key to activate the *portal* from this direction is a sarrukh scale, which must be placed into a hidden crevice (Search DC 30) 6 feet above the ground on any side. The terminus points on the other planes are simply open areas. The return key is the heart of any Scaleless One slain within the past hour, which must be placed on the open ground while uttering a prayer to the World Serpent.

concluding the Adventure

If the PCs defeat the khaastas, they can investigate the obelisk and loot the ruins to their hearts' content. Any khaastas that escape return immediately to their leaders and report their findings, prompting their leaders to dispatch a vrock (see *Monster Manual* page 48) to investigate. If the khaastas fail to report within 2 more weeks, a force of thirty khaastas led by a 6th-level khaasta cleric arrives to find out what happened to this group.

The Defiled Temple of the World Serpent

The Defiled Temple of the World Serpent is a short, site-based adventure for 7th-level characters that can be placed within any swamp in Faerûn. The season is unimportant as long as the prevailing weather is warm to hot.

Background

Originally built by the sarrukh of Mhairshaulk, this structure was once a temple to the World Serpent. During the centuries that it sat unused, it gradually sank into the mud of a swamp in the southern Mhair Jungles—a region considered sacred by the yuan-ti that live in the surrounding area.

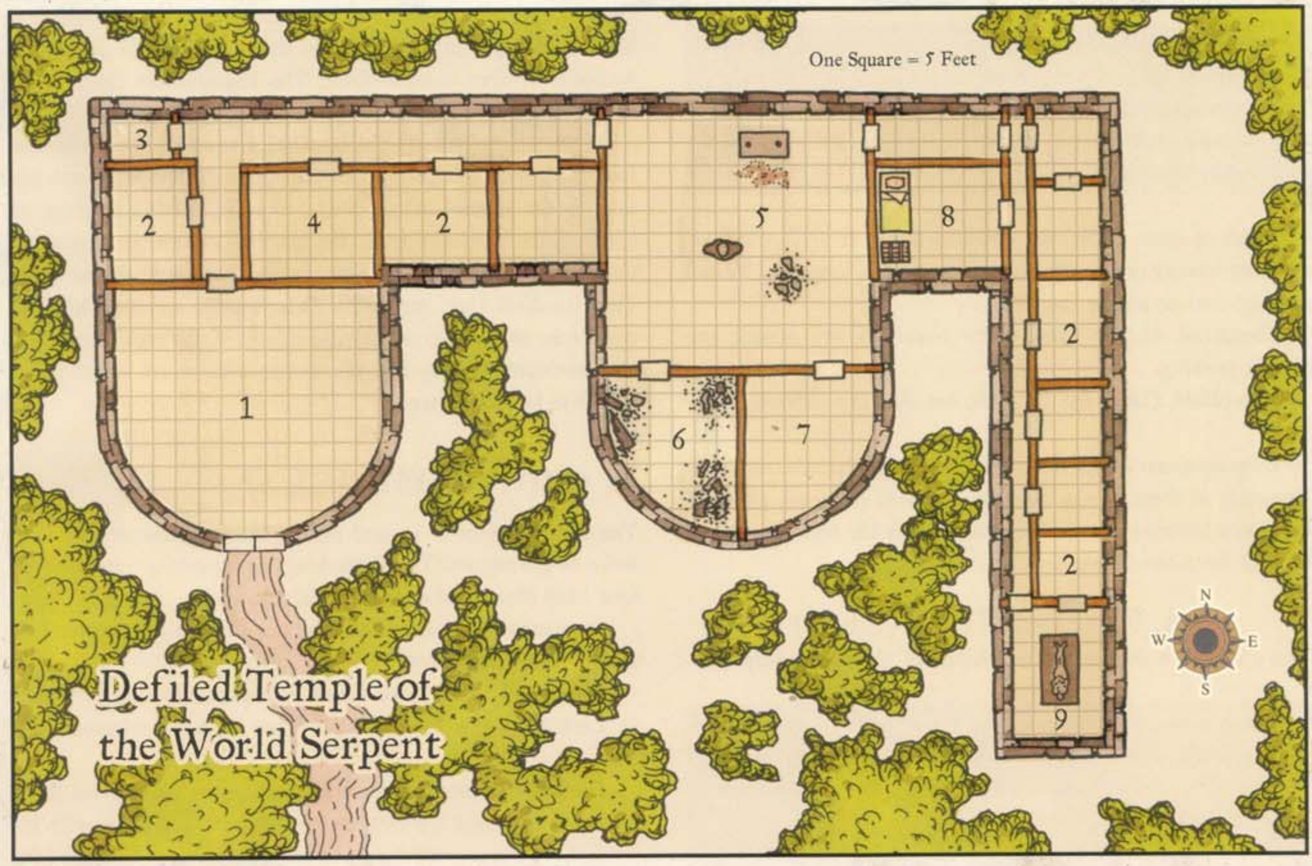
Because it was once a holy place of the sarrukh, claiming this structure was a major victory for the faithful of Sess'innek. A group of lizardfolk, led by the lizard king Kha'ghassta and a few of his khaasta allies located the temple some weeks ago. They immediately moved into the structure, defiled all the statues and religious artifacts the sarrukh considered sacred, and converted the place into a temple to Sess'innek. Despite their apparent success, however, access to one chamber (area 9) eludes them. They have yet to enter that room, and they suspect that something of great value lies within.

In fact, this ancient sarrukh temple is the resting place for a legendary weapon called *Serpent's Fang*, the weapon of one of the most famous warriors the sarrukh empire ever produced. This greatsword was crafted for Il'nik'tu, one of the few sarrukh who chose to become a warrior rather than grow lazy while servitors defended the empire. Thousands of years ago, Il'nik'tu led the yuan-ti and other scaly races against their enemies while the sarrukh empire was falling. He is regarded as a hero by both the yuan-ti and the sarrukh even to this day.

The sarrukh and their allies have been trying to locate this lost temple of the World Serpent for quite some time because they desperately desire to regain Il'nik'tu's weapon as an inspiration for their people in their continuing struggle to reassert dominance. Not only do they wish to recover *Serpent's Fang*, they would also like to re-establish the temple as a place of worship. By doing so, they could claim a moral victory against the khaastas and their demonic allies.

The khaastas and their allies also know of the blade and are actively looking for it. Should they find it first, they intend to taunt their enemies with it by allowing their best warrior to wield it in battle against the sarrukh. Such a display would surely deal a serious blow to sarrukh morale.

The humans of the area know nothing of the dire conflict between the evil reptilian folk of the area, but the lizard king's hunger for human flesh has engendered a situation that may



provoke discovery of the temple by adventurers. The occupying tribe has been actively seeking out and capturing humans—both travelers and residents of nearby villages. During the past couple of weeks, residents of the surrounding settlements have become aware that people are disappearing, and they have decided to seek aid in finding them.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs must enter the temple and explore it, overcoming the lizardfolk and the khaastas in the process. Assuming they successfully penetrate the temple, they may be able to gain access to area 9 and recover the sought-after blade.

Beginning the Adventure

The temple is made of basalt and lies buried under many feet of mud. The ceilings in most sections of the temple are 40 feet above the floor, although they rise to a height of 60 feet in the domes areas. Despite its age and degree of immersion in swamp muck, the temple is remarkably well preserved.

1. Entrance (EL Variable)

Dense foliage conceals the temple so well that anyone who fails a DC 15 Spot check mistakes it for yet another vegetation-covered mound in this jungle. When the PCs have noticed it, read or paraphrase the following:

> A structure made of basalt stones has sunk several feet into the marshy ground. Vines crawl up the side of the building, and mangroves lean up against it. A pair of ornate double doors with snakes engraved upon them constitutes the only apparent entrance.

This pair of doors is the only entrance to the temple. A lock of amazing quality once secured them, but it has long since rusted through and no longer functions.

Creatures: At any time, a few lizardfolk are outside the temple hunting.

Lizardfolk (1d4): hp 12 each; see *Monster Manual* page 169.

Development: Closer examination reveals that the mud immediately in front of the doorway has been removed, allowing the doors to swing outward. Continue with the following when the PCs open the doors.

1A. Entrance Hall (EL 6)

This chamber once received worshipers of the World Serpent.

> This immense chamber is shaped like a rectangle melded to a semicircle. The double doors open into the center of the semicircular portion, and on the opposite side of the room is a single door set just to the left of center. A domed ceiling rises some 60 feet above the smooth floor.
>
> The glass that once allowed light to filter into the chamber is still in place, but the exterior is covered with dirt and foliage, allowing only a few shafts of light to penetrate. Piles of rubble litter the chamber, and a ledge protrudes from the wall 15 feet above the floor.

Years ago, numerous marble statues of the World Serpent decorated this room, but the lizardfolk and their allies have smashed those to rubble. Hidden handholds (Search DC 15) in the walls allow access to the ledge.

Creatures: Two khaastas and three lizardfolk stand guard over this room. When the PCs arrive, they are hiding within patches of darkness toward the rear of the chamber.

Khaastas (2): hp 19, 23; see *Fiend Folio* page 115.

Lizardfolk (3): hp 11, 12, 14; see *Monster Manual* page 169.

Tactics: The khaastas and lizardfolk immediately attack any intruders who do not appear to be of their own races. If the guards are aware of the PCs for at least 1 round before they enter, the lizardfolk are already standing upon the ledge. Otherwise, they begin by taking a move action to climb up to the ledge using the tiny handholds. Once atop it, the lizardfolk throw their tipped javelins, which are coated with sleep poison (see Poisons in Chapter 10) at the characters. Meanwhile, the khaastas engage the party in melee combat. Extra javelins have been left on the ledge, giving each combatant access to a total of five.

Each khaasta carries in its mouth a dried chicken bladder filled with the same poison that coats the lizardfolk's arrows. Once during the combat, each of them can bite the chicken bladder as a free action, spraying the poison on all opponents within a 10-foot quarter-circle. The khaastas are immune to the poison.

If the characters use the handholds to climb the walls, the lizardfolk use their javelins to trip them. A tripped character falls to the ground below, lying prone. If the PCs manage to climb up to the ledge level, the lizardfolk attempt to grapple them and jump from the ledge, taking the battle to the floor. Two lizardfolk then engage the PCs in melee combat while the third runs to the nearest guardpost (area 2) for reinforcements.

Development: Any PCs who fall in combat are locked up in area 3 to be eaten later.

2. Guardposts (EL 5)

The temple contains several nearly identical rooms that now serve as guardposts. The furnishings are spartan, consisting of four hard chairs and a table in each chamber.

Creatures: Three lizardfolk and one khaasta are on guard in each of these chambers.

Khaasta (1): hp 22; see *Fiend Folio* page 115.

Lizardfolk (3): hp 11, 12, 14; see *Monster Manual* page 169.

Tactics: The guards in these rooms have orders to prevent intruders from going any farther into the temple. The lizardfolk's javelins are tipped with sleep poison (see Poisons in Chapter 10), as are the barbs on the khaasta's net. The khaasta is not proficient with the net, so she takes a −4 penalty on her attack rolls with that weapon.

Development: If at any time the main force in the temple is alerted to the presence of invaders, the guards in the nearest two rooms leave their posts to investigate the disturbance. Any captured or slain PCs are taken to area 3, where they are held for Kha'ghassta to eat later.

3. cold storage

This chamber is for prisoners being saved for Kha'ghassta's meals and for corpses that the lizardfolk and khaastas can dine upon. The door is locked (Open Locks DC 23). Read or paraphrase the following when the characters enter.

> This chamber is dark and extremely cold. Five frightened-looking humans sit on the floor. The foul smell of rotting meat permeates the room, rising from a half-eaten human corpse the floor.

Because of the angle at which the temple has sunk into the earth, this corner room is buried deeper in the ground than most of the rest of the temple. Because of this, it stays cold despite the heat outside.

The key to this chamber is among Kha'ghassta's possessions.

Creatures: Five human prisoners sit unbound within this room.

Prisoners (5): Male and female human commoner 5; CR 4; Medium humanoid; HD 5d4+5; hp 17; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 11, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk +4 melee (1d3+2, unarmed strike); Full Atk +4 melee (1d3+2, unarmed strike); AL NG; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Craft (any) +4, Profession (hunter) +8, Swim +7; Far Shot, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Simple Weapon Proficiency (longbow).

Possessions: Padded armor, torch, waterskin, trail rations, bedroll.

Development: The prisoners are traumatized but willing to tell the PCs all they know. Each was captured on the road near the marsh within the past three days. Each day, the lizardfolk come and take one or two people out, who never return. Once the prisoners tried to overpower the guards as a group but did not succeed. The half-eaten corpse was left there as a lesson to them after that incident.

Any party member brought here for imprisonment is disarmed and locked in this chamber with the other prisoners for 12 hours. At that point, he or she is taken to area 5 to be sacrificed.

4. khaasta chambers (EL 7)

The khaastas have converted this room into their lair. While they normally prefer to camp outdoors, they know that this temple is in enemy territory, so they remain inside.

> Eight large rocks are spaced evenly throughout this room. Aside from the rocks, there are no furnishings in view. Four scaly creatures take their ease here.

Creatures: If the temple is not yet on alert, four khaatas are resting here.

Khaastas (4): hp 20, 22, 25, 30; see *Fiend Folio* page 115.

Tactics: Unless the party has made a great deal of noise in a nearby area, or the temple has been alerted to the presence of intruders, the khaastas are asleep when the PCs enter. It takes them 1 round to awaken and another round to grab their weapons. If given the chance, they call for help from room 2.

Development: If captured and interrogated, these khaastas can reveal the name of the lizard king (Kha'ghassta) and the reason for their occupation. (The place is an old sarrukh temple.) They do not know there is anything especially valuable here.

5. ceremonial chamber (EL 5)

This room was once the ceremonial chamber for honoring the World Serpent.

> At the center of this square room stands a 20-foot-tall statue of a snake-bodied humanoid that is missing its head and arms. The head lies on the floor next to the base of the statue, and bits of rubble are scattered nearby. At the base of the statue is a dais bearing a brown-stained altar. Nearby stands a large piece of stone, still formless and unworked. Four lizardfolk, one wearing ceremonial robes, are laboring over it with sharp tools.

The desecrated statue depicted an aspect of the World Serpent. Its arms have already been smashed to bits, and the rubble from them litters the floor. The larger pieces, however, have already been gathered, crushed, and mixed with other ingredients to make a new piece of stone.

The lizardfolk have been using the sacrificial altar at the base of the vandalized snake statue to sacrifice prisoners to Sess'innek so that Kha'ghaasta can satisfy his urge to eat.

Creatures: Currently, three ordinary lizardfolk and a cleric of Sess'innek are carving the reconstituted rock into a new statue of their demon-god.

Lizardfolk (3): hp 11, 12, 13; see *Monster Manual* page 169.

K'ss'la: Female lizardfolk cleric 2 of Sess'innek; CR 3; Medium humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+4 plus 2d8+4; hp 26; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21, touch 9, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk +4 melee (1d4+2, claw) or +5 melee (1d8+3, *+1 heavy mace*) or +2 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); Full Atk +4 melee (1d4+2, 2 claws) and +2 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +5 melee (1d8+3, *+1 heavy mace*) and +2 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +2 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA rebuke undead 3/day (+0, 2d6+2, 2nd); SQ hold breath; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 10. Height 5 ft. 1 in., Weight 150 lbs.

Skills and Feats: Balance +0, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +2, Jump +3, Knowledge (arcana) +3, Spellcraft +4, Swim −3; Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Multiattack.

Hold Breath (Ex): K'ss'la can hold her breath for 56 rounds before she risks drowning (see page 304 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Cleric Spells Prepared (4/4; save DC 12 + spell level): 0—*create water, cure minor wounds, detect magic, purify food and drink;* 1st—*cause fear, command, cure light wounds, protection from law**.

*Domain spell. Deity: Sess'innek. Domains: Chaos (cast chaos spells at +1 caster level), Darkness (Blind-Fight as a bonus feat).

Possessions: +1 scale mail, heavy steel shield, *+1 heavy mace,* masterwork light crossbow, 10 crossbow bolts, *potion of cure moderate wounds, 2 potions of cure light wounds,* backpack, waterskin, trail rations, bedroll, sack, flint and steel, wooden holy symbol.

Tactics: Because K'ss'la has not been able to bypass the *arcane lock* on the door to area 9, she would rather make a deal with any intruders than fight them. If the PCs do not immediately attack, she offers them two rubies from Kha'ghassta's treasure chest to help her bypass the door and allow her people to take the items within. If the PCs refuse, she gives her companions the signal to attack.

On K'ss'la's command, the lizardfolk attack the PCs with their javelins, which are coated with sleep poison (see Poisons in Chapter 10). If possible, K'ss'la calls out for aid, then casts *protection from law* on the first round of combat, followed by *cause fear* the next. Therafter, she tries to stay out of combat and heal her allies. If forced into melee combat, she fights using her heavy mace.

Development: If the characters accept K'ss'la's offer, she leads them to area 9. If they slay all the lizardfolk in the chamber, they can continue to explore on their own.

6. Lair of the Chaos Beast (EL 7)

This chamber was once a library, but it is now the lair of a chaos beast that has been a servant of these lizardfolk since long before they came to this temple.

> This domed, quarter-circle room is lined with bookshelves filled with dusty, ancient-looking, leather-bound books. The windows overhead are covered with vegetation, so only a few shafts of light illuminate the darkened chamber. Bones of various kinds litter the floor.

The books on the shelves are so ancient that their pages disintegrate when touched. The bones are from humanoid and animal victims that the chaos beast has dragged here to consume.

Creature: A chaos beast currently resides here, although it is allowed out of the temple to prey on other creatures at will.

Chaos Beast: hp 55; see *Monster Manual* page 33.

Tactics: The chaos beast is hiding among the bookshelves when the characters arrive. It attacks when a good opportunity presents itself and changes forms often during combat.

7. Lizardfolk Chambers (EL 6)

The majority of the lizardfolk inhabiting the temple stay in this room when they are not manning the guardposts or hunting for food.

> On the floor along the east wall of this domed, quarter-circular chamber are fifteen bedrolls tightly packed together. Near the opposite wall is pile of discarded food and waste. Nine scaly humanoids are gnawing on what appears to be human body parts.

The lizardfolk in this room spend the majority of their time eating or sleeping, though fights occasionally break out when they become bored.

Creatures: Nine lizardfolk are currently dining on the remains of a human prisoner in this chamber.

Lizardfolk (9): hp 11, 11, 12, 12, 13, 13, 13, 14, 15; see *Monster Manual* page 169.

Tactics: Unless the party has made a great deal of noise in a nearby area, or the temple has been alerted to the presence of intruders, the lizardfolk are unprepared for intruders. It takes them 1 round to grab their weapons. If given the chance, they call for help from the nearest guard room (area 2). Each lizardfolk has a javelin tipped with sleep poison (see Poisons in Chapter 10) and two barbed nets treated with the same poison (see area 2). They are not proficient with the nets, so each takes a −4 penalty on attacks made with them.

Development: Characters who fall in battle here are disarmed and imprisoned in area 3.

8. Kha'ghassta's Chamber (EL 8)

This room once belonged to the sarrukh cleric in charge of this temple, but the lizard king Kha'ghaasta has claimed it for his own.

> Within this opulent-looking bedchamber stands a powerfully built lizard-man with dark coloration and wings. Four other scaly humanoid creatures attend him.

This room is furnished with a bed that has recently been restored and with a chest that the lizard king brought with him.

Creatures: The lizard king is accompanied by four khaasta guards at all times. Should he hear the sound of fighting, he leaves this room to investigate the disturbance.

Kha'ghassta: Male lizard king barbarian 2; CR 4; Medium humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+6 plus 2d12+6; hp 34; Init +5;

Spd 40 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); AC 25, touch 13, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +3; Grp +10; Atk +10 melee (1d4+7, claw) or +12 melee (2d6+12/19–20, *+2 greatsword*) or +8 ranged (1d8/×3, longbow); Full Atk +10 melee (1d4+7, 2 claws) and +8 melee (1d6+3, bite) or +12 melee (2d6+12/19–20, *+2 greatsword*) and +8 melee (1d4+3, bite) or +8 ranged (1d8/×3, longbow); SA rage 1/day, smite good, spell-like abilities; SQ damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., fast movement, hold breath, immunities (poison), resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, and fire 10, spell resistance 14, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +9, Will +2; Str 25, Dex 20, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Bluff +3, Climb +6, Diplomacy +3, Hide +4, Intimidate +5, Jump +17, Knowledge (the planes) +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Ride +10, Search +4, Spot +3, Survival +8, Swim +10; Multiattack, Power Attack.

Rage: While Kha'ghaasta rages, the following changes to the above statistics are in effect: HD 2d8+10 plus 2d12+10; hp 42; AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 23; Grp +12; Atk +12 melee (1d4+9, claw) or +14 melee (2d6+15/19–20, *+2 greatsword*) or +8 ranged (1d8/×3, longbow); Full Atk +12 melee (1d4+9, 2 claws) and +10 melee (1d6+4, bite) or +14 melee (2d6+15/19–20, *+2 greatsword*) and +10 melee (1d4+4, bite) or +8 ranged (1d8/×3, longbow); SV Fort +9, Will +4; Str 29, Con 20; Climb +8, Jump +19, Swim +12. His fit of rage lasts for 8 rounds.

Smite Good (Su): Once per day, Kha'ghaasta can make a normal melee attack to deal 4 points of extra damage against a good foe.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*darkness;* 1/day—*desecrate.* Caster level 4th.

Possessions: + 1 breastplate, +2 greatsword, longbow, 20 arrows, 5 cold iron arrows, 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds, potion of neutralize poison, cloak of resistance +1,* climber's kit.

Khaastas (4): hp 25, 30; see *Fiend Folio* page 115.

Tactics: When the PCs open the door to this room, the khaastas rush to block their path, standing side-by-side in the doorway. Kha'ghassta takes to the air and tries to stay out of sight until the characters have managed to fight their way into the room. At that point, he drops down, flies into a rage, and attacks. His preferred target is any character who appears to be an arcane spellcaster.

Development: If the battle does not go well for Kha'ghassta, he attempts to flee the temple with any lizardfolk and khaastas that are still alive and mobile.

Any characters that fall in battle here are disarmed and taken to area 3 to await sacrifice.

Treasure: The chest is locked (Open Lock DC 25). It contains 540 gp, two rubies (2, 250 gp each), *dust of disappearance,* and a *folding boat.*

9. Serpent's Fang (EL 9)

This room is the final resting place of the sarrukh hero Il'nik'tu, wielder of *Serpent's Fang.* An *arcane lock* secures the door. The lizardfolk inhabiting the temple do not currently have the means to bypass the spell, so they have not yet penetrated this chamber.

Trap: Opening the door activates a spell placed by the sarrukh and summons a piscoloth. The piscoloth immediately casts *stinking cloud* on the party and then dives into melee, using its pincers and tentacles. If the battle goes poorly for the creature, it summons four skeroloths to keep the attackers busy, then uses its *meld into stone* ability to hide for 1d3 rounds, hoping to surprise its foes when it emerges.

***Summon Monster VIII* Trap**: CR 9; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effect (*summon monster VIII,* 15th-level wizard, piscoloth); Search DC 33; Disable Device DC 33. *Cost:* 60,500 gp, 4,840 XP.

Piscoloth: hp 65; see *Fiend Folio* page 196.

Skereloths (4): hp 22, 25, 27, 35; see *Fiend Folio* page 197.

> In the center of this room stands a stone platform bearing the body of a scaly creature in ceremonial armor. The corpse holds an immense sword that is clearly well crafted. Carvings of writhing serpents decorate the walls of the chamber, but it is otherwise unadorned.

Il'nik'tu was a legged sarrukh of great strength. His body has been preserved with a permanent *gentle repose* spell.

Development: Il'nik'tu is truly dead and does not animate if his sword is removed from his hands.

Treasure: The only treasures within this room are *Serpent's Fang* (a *+2 viper greatsword*) and the suit of *+3 full plate armor* that Il'nik'tu wears.

Concluding the Adventure

If the characters leave the temple with *Serpent's Fang,* the sarrukh eventually learn of its whereabouts and send their minions to retrieve it. If the PCs destroy the blade, the sarrukh may seek vengeance if they find out, but they have so many other worries that they make no more than a couple of attacks.

If the PCs open area 9 and allow the lizardfolk to take the sword, they let the characters leave in peace. Shortly thereafter, Kha'ghassta presents the blade to the khaasta leaders, who declare the lizard king and his tribe honorary members. They use the sword in their ongoing struggle against the sarrukh, and the morale blow to the enemy gives the khaastas the upper hand, at least temporarily.

Should the party leave the temple without clearing it or retrieving *Serpent's Fang,* the sarrukh discover the location two weeks later. Unlike the lizardfolk and the khaastas, they do have the magic necessary to enter area 9 and retrieve the sword. The legendary blade motivates their followers to attack the khaastas in several locations throughout Faerûn. Their raids are so successful that they gain the upper hand in the struggle, at least temporarily.

APPENDIX

This section provides a table of Faerûn's historical eras, a table of racial abilities for the various Scaled Ones described in this book, and a reference section on the deities of the Scaled Ones.

Historical Eras of Faerûn

The following table gives the beginning and ending dates of all known realms in the history of Faerûn. All dates are in Dalereckoning (DR). The notation "(present day)" means that the realm still survives, at least after a fashion.

Empire	Dates
Days of Thunder	**–35,000 to –30,000**
Sarrukh Empires	–35,000 to –33,500
Isstosseffifil	–34,500 to –33,800 (present day, Oreme only)
Mhairshaulk (sarrukh)	–34,800 to –33,500
Mhairshaulk (yuan-ti)	–33,500 to –24,000
Okoth	–35,000 to –34,100, 699 to present day
Batrachi Empires	–33,500 to –31,00
Clearee Empires	–31,000 to –30,000
Faerie	–34,000 to present day
Dawn Ages/Time of Dragons	**–30,000 to –24,000**
Reign of Dragons	–30,000 to –24,000
Reign of Giants	–28,000 to –25,000
Ostoria (cloud, fire, frost, hill, storm, and titans)	–28,000 to –25,000
The First Flowering	**–24,000 to –12,000**
Aryvandaar (gold elves)	–23,900 to –9,000
Shantel Othreier (gold and moon elves)	–23,600 to –10,100
Illythir (dark elves)	–23,200 to –10,000
Syòpiir (green elves)	–23,100 to –11,600
Illefarn (green and moon elves)	–22,900 to 342
Orishaar (moon elves)	–22,500 to –11,700
Thearnytaar (green elves)	–21,400 to –11,200
Eiellûr (green elves)	–21,000 to –11,400
Miyiertar (dark and green elves)	–18,800 to –10,500
Keltormir (green and moon elves)	–17,800 to –8,500
Bhaerynden (gold dwarves)	–15,000 to –9,000
Elven Crown Wars	**–12,000 to –9,000**
Age of the Proud Peoples	**–9,000 to –3,000**
Shanatar (shield dwarves)	–11,000 to –1,900
Elven Court (gold, green, and moon elves)	–10,000 to –4,000
Synnoria (moon elves)	–9,800 to present day
Telantiwar (drow)	–9,600 to –7,600
Rystall Wood (green elves)	–8,800 to –64
Evereska (gold, green, and moon elves)	–8,600 to present day
Siluvanede (gold elves)	–8,400 to 882
Jhyrennstar	–8,400 to –4,000
Uvaeren (gold and moon elves)	–8,200 to –5,000
Semberholme (moon elves)	–8,000 to –4,000
Sharrven (green and moon elves)	–7,600 to –2,770
Deep Lands (gold dwarves)	–7,600 to present day
Sarphil (shield dwarves)	–7,500 to –4,400
Oghrann (shield dwarves)	–5,215 to –3,770
Haunghdannar (shield dwarves)	–4,974 to –3,389

Ghaurraghaur (shield dwarves)	–4,819 to –3,611
Eaerlann (green and moon elves)	–4,700 to 882
Besilmer (shield dwarves)	–4,420 to –4,160
Ammarindar (shield dwarves)	–4,100 to 882
Cormanthyr (gold, green, and moon elves)	–4,000 to 1344
Delzoun (shield dwarves)	–3,900 to –100
Deepkingdom (gray dwarves)	–3,717 to present day
Ironstar (shield dwarves)	–2,919 to 207
Age of Humanity	**–3,000 to present day**
Calimshan	–6,060 to present day
Jhaamdath	–5,800 to –255
Netheril	–3,859 to –339
Imaskar	–3,600 to –2,448 (present day, Deep Imaskar; see *Underdark*)
Mezro/Chult	–2,637 to present day
Mulhorand	–2,135 to present day
Unther	–2,087 to present day
Narfell	–900 to –150
Raumathar	–900 to –150
*Serpentes	–304 to 10 (present day)

*Serpentes is included as a "human" realm, since the yuan-ti are partially of human ancestry.

Deities of the Scaled Ones

The deities worshiped by the various Scaled Ones are summarized in the table on the next page. Details of their origins and histories are provided in the paragraphs that follow.

Essylliss

After the creation of the lizardfolk, the World Serpent created an aspect of himself in their image. The god felt the need to give these simple creatures a deity they could call their own, lest they be distracted by the plethora of other deities. The worship of Essylliss lasted two thousand years after the fall of sarrukh-ruled Mhairshaulk. Ultimately, however, the splintered factions of the lizardfolk began worshiping Semuanya. Today Essylliss is worshiped by a handful of lizardfolk, and barely a trace of him remains.

M'daess

The issue of nonsarrukh sacrifices was the first major point of division for the World Serpent. When the sarrukh made the decision that members of their own race were too important to sacrifice to their god, they violated one of the earliest and most fundamental doctrines of their religion. Though the World Serpent agreed in principle that Scaleless Ones made acceptable sacrifices, he couldn't reconcile changing the agreement with the sarrukh. Rather than back down from his demands or force them to hold to the original agreement (and thereby risk their defection to another deity), the World Serpent created an aspect of himself called M'daess, the snake-mother, whose task was to purify the souls of the unclean who were sacrificed in the World Serpent's name, thus making them equivalent to sarrukh souls in the eyes of their god.

Merrshaulk

Upon the fragmentation of their primary deity, the sarrukh chose to venerate the aspect embodied by Merrshaulk. This cruel and despotic deity set the sarrukh on the path toward absolute evil. Merrshaulk cared little for the plight of the serpent races, as long as they continued to worship him. He inexplicably sank into a deep slumber that lasted for thousands of years. Ultimately, he was reborn in the form of his avatar Sseth, the deity that the yuan-ti now venerate.

Parrafaire

The Naga Prince is the guardian of magical secrets and hidden places far below the ground. His goal is not to prevent access to such secrets, but to test the wisdom and resourcefulness of those who come seeking them. Parrafaire delights in creating clever traps, decoys, diversions, and mazes, and in offering cryptic clues. His religious teachings are presented in the form of riddles and puzzles to be deciphered by the worshiper.

The Prince of Hidden Secrets has few worshipers and no established church, although almost all nagas pay him at least indirect homage.

Semuanya

The lizardfolk currently embrace Semuanya, an unfeeling and uncaring fragment of the World Serpent. Semuanya promotes only survival and teaches that any action taken in the pursuit of that goal is acceptable. He dismisses the majority of the struggles that take place in Faerûn, including the plight of his followers, as completely irrelevant. Semuanya has no allies, and his only enemy is the demon lord Sess'innek.

Shekinester

Shekinester is a complex, pragmatic goddess with five aspects: the Acquirer (LE), the Empowerer (LG), the Seeker (CG), the Weaver (CE), and the Preserver (N). Each aspect is represented and venerated as a separate goddess.

The Acquirer: This aspect of the goddess represents the urge to control and possess. She is often represented as a harsh-faced, shrewish female naga clinging desperately to her failing youth. As the Acquirer, the Five-Faced Queen seeks to hoard knowledge and wisdom that is in danger of being lost or forgotten.

The Empowerer: In her role as guardian of the young and uninitiated, the Empowerer is a bestower of wisdom. Represented with the head of a beautiful young maiden, she is generally viewed as kindly and merciful. As the Empowerer, Shekinester actively seeks opportunities to grant wisdom to those who have not even realized they have need of such. This aspect of her nature can also make her an unwelcome messenger who forces followers into initiations that can cause them "growing pains."

The Seeker: Often represented as a childlike naga, the Seeker is filled with curiosity. This aspect of Shekinester drives the need to explore and study.

The Weaver: This aspect of the Five-Faced Queen is the principle of active destruction—a crone-faced naga who destroys in order to make room for new life. However, she is also the embodiment of connections, bringing together disparate strands of knowledge to create new understanding. As the Weaver, Shekinester seeks to destroy anyone who enters the lost and decaying places she guards.

The Preserver: Seen as a middle-aged female naga, this aspect of the goddess is the keeper of the flame in the Court of Light and the great maintainer of existence. She also has jurisdiction over the spirits of the dead, greeting them with water, fruit, and bread and protecting them from harm. As the Preserver, Shekinester provides sustenance for mortals threatened by extinction, overwhelming force, or some other terrible threat.

sseth

Around the time of Netheril's collapse, a charismatic Yuan-ti with feathery wings emerged, proclaiming himself to be the avatar of Merrshaulk, who had long been in a state of somnolence. Serpentes, a great Yuan-ti kingdom, was forged under the rule of this new leader, who called himself Sseth. The yuan-ti and the few remaining sarrukh began to worship him as the new incarnation of Merrshaulk. Ultimately, Sseth too sank into a long slumber, which eventually caused the sarrukh of Okoth to transfer their allegiance to the Mulhorandi deity Set.

ssharstrune

Another fragment of the World Serpent was Ssharstrune, a serpent god worshiped primarily by evil nagas. Ssharstrune, who embodied the acquisitive, power-hungry natures of some nagas, was ultimately swallowed by Shekinester, inadvertently causing her to assume multiple aspects.

sss'thasine'ss

Another aspect of the World Serpent, Sss'thasine'ss was an evil deity once worshiped by yuan-ti, dark nagas, and a few other Scaled Ones. He appeared to his followers as a writhing swarm of coiled serpents in a crude humanoid shape and typically communicated through the heads of countless smaller snakes. Sss'thasine'ss was ultimately destroyed by one of the elf gods around the time that the Vyshaantaar rose to power in Aryvandaar. Talona has since assumed his aspect.

DEITIES OF THE SCALED ONES

Name (Status) *	**Alignment**	**Favored Weapon/ Weapon of the Deity**
Essylliss (D)	N	Club/ *+1 impact club*
Laogzed (D)	CE	Great club/ *+1 vicious greatclub*
M'daess (D)	NG	Scythe/ *+1 merciful scythe*
Merrshaulk (aspect of Sseth) †	CE	Longsword/ *+1 venomous longsword*
Parrafaire (D)	CN	Tail scythe^{SK}/ *+1 warning tail scythe*
Sebek (D)	NE	Longspear, halfspear, or shortspear/ *+1 keen longspear, halfspear,* or *shortspear*
Semuanya (L)	N	Club/ *+1 screaming club*
Sess'innek (DP)	CE	Longsword/ *+1 corrosive longsword*
Shekinester (G)	LG/CG/ N/LE/CE	Tail scythe^{SK}/ *+1 sure striking tail scythe*
Sseth (aspect of Set) (I)	LE	Longspear, halfspear, or shortspear/*+1 venomous longspear, halfspear,* or *shortspear*
Sseth (imprisoned**) (I)	CE	Scimitar/ *+1 venomous scimitar*
Ssharstrune (aspect of Shekinester)	NE	Tail scythe^{SK}/ *+1 ghost touch tail scythe*
Sss'thasine'ss (aspect of Talona)	CE	Whip/ *+1 sweeping whip*
Varae (aspect of Sseth) †	CN	Scimitar/ *+1 venomous scimitar*

varae

A nomadic beast cult made up of humans in the Shining Plains began worshiping the god Varae during the Fifth Age of Calimshan (200 DR to 270 DR). A group of pureblood yuan-ti from the Chultan Peninsula infiltrated the cult and spread its influence across Faerûn. One group of cultists migrated north in search of Ss'thar'tiss'ssun, only to be transformed *en masse* into ophidians when they unleashed an artifact created by House Orogoth and left behind by the yuan-ti.

DEITIES OF THE SCALED ONES (CONTINUED)

Name (Status) *	Domains	Symbol	Portfolio	Worshiped by
Essylliss (D)	Animal, Protection, Scalykind, Storm, War, Watery Death††	Lizard head	Lizardfolk	A handful of lizardfolk
Laogzed (D)	Chaos, Death, Destruction, Slime	Oozing toad-lizard	Hunger, destruction	Troglodytes, tren
M'daess (D)	Animal, Family, Plant, Renewal, Water	Cracked egg with snake emerging serpentfolk	Purification, young snakes and	Sarrukh
Merrshaulk (aspect of Sseth) †	Animal, Chaos, Charm, Destruction, Fate, Plant, Scalykind, War	Cobra head	Beasts, predators, somnolence	Yuan-ti outcasts, hunters, asabi of Oreme
Parrafaire (D)	Illusion, Protection, Scalykind, War	Male naga head with feathered ears	Guardianship	Nagas
Sebek (D)	Animal, Evil, Scalykind, Water	Crocodile wearing a horned and plumed headdress	River hazards, crocodiles, werecrocodiles	Druids, inhabitants of crocodile-infested areas, rangers, werecrocodiles
Semuanya (L)	Animal, Fate, Healing, Plant, Protection, Renewal, Scalykind, War	Lizard egg	Survival, propagation	Lizardfolk, free asabi of Anauroch
Sess'innek (DP)	Darkness, Destruction, Tyranny, War, Watery Death††	Clawed green reptilian hand	Civilization, dominion	Khaastas, lizard kings and lizardfolk they rule
Shekinester (G)	Chaos, Evil, Fate, Good, Law, Magic, Renewal, Protection, Scalykind, Spells	Book (Seeker), coin (Acquirer), mask (Weaver), mirror (Empowerer), grain jar (Preserver)	Varies by aspect	Nagas, pterafolk
Sseth (aspect of Set) (I)	Air, Darkness, Evil, Hatred, Law, Magic, Scalykind	Coiled cobra	The desert, destruction, drought, night, rot, snakes, hate, betrayal, evil magic, ambition, poison, murder	Evil Mulan, jackalweres, Okothian, sarrukh, worshipers of imprisoned Sseth
Sseth (imprisoned**) (I)	Air, Animal, Chaos, Evil, Knowledge, Magic, Planning, Scalykind, Trickery	Flying snake with fangs bared	Poison, somnolence	Yuan-ti, Mhairshaulkan and Isstosseffifil sarrukh, ophidians, sentient snakes, spirit nagas
Ssharstrune (aspect of Shekinester)	Charm, Evil, Magic, Scalykind, Tyranny	Ghostly naga head	Acquisition, power	Dark nagas
Sss'thasine'ss (aspect of Talona)	Animal, Chaos, Death, Evil, Healing, Scalykind	Swarm of writhing snakes	Venomous creatures	Yuan-ti, dark nagas
Varae (aspect of Sseth) †	Animal, Chaos, Scalykind, Watery Death††	Snake biting its tail	Snakes	Yuan-ti purebloods, ophidians, Calishite barbarians

* Status abbreviations: G = greater deity; I = intermediate deity; L =lesser deity; D = demigod, DP = demon prince

** The true Sseth is currently imprisoned and unreachable by worshipers. These statistics reflect Sseth's portfolio, should he be freed and recover his portfolio from the usurper Set.

*** Note that Set now allows CE clerics of his aspect of Sseth, in addition to his normally allowed cleric alignments.

† Aspects of Sseth are currently aspects of Set, and follow rules for Sseth [aspect of Set]. These statistics reflect the aspect's unique characteristics, should Sseth be freed and recover his portfolio from the usurper Set.

†† See *Player's Guide to Faerûn* or *Underdark*.

RACIAL TRAITS TABLE I

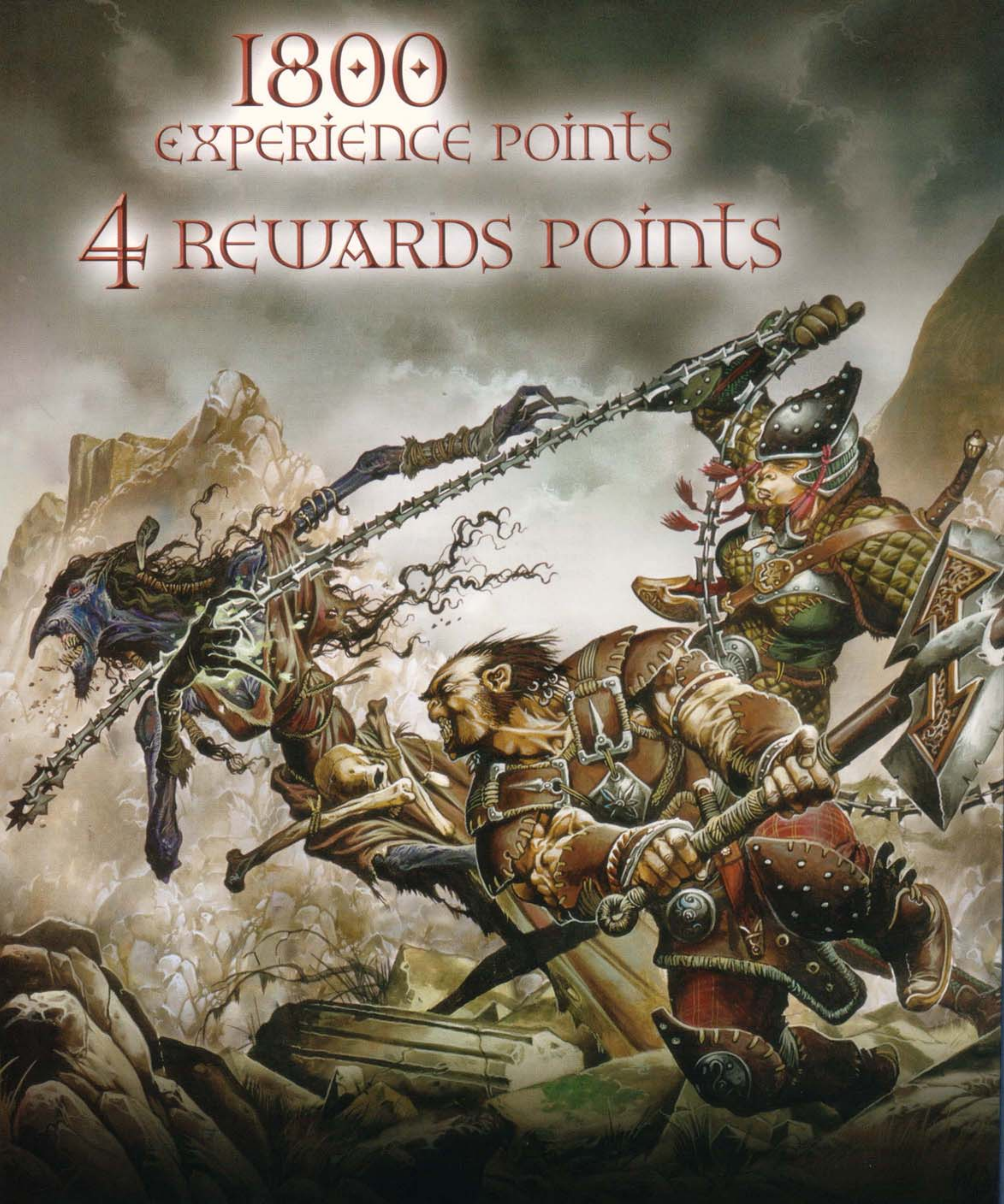
Race	Ability Score Adjustments	Size	Speed	Racial Hit Dice	Base Attack/ Base Saves	Racial Skill Points	Class Skills	Racial Feats
Asabi	+2 Dex, +2 Int, +2 Wis	Medium	50 ft., burrow 20 ft.	3d8	+3/+1/+3/+3	(2+Int mod) × 6	Hide, Jump, Move Silently	2 (Combat Reflexes, Skill Focus [Jump])
Asabi, stingtail	+4 Str, +4 Con, –4 Int, –2 Cha	Large	40 ft., burrow 30 ft.	7d8	+7/+2/+5/+5	(2+Int mod) × 10	Hide, Jump, Move Silently	3 (Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Skill Focus [Jump])
Broodguard	+2 Dex, +2 Con, –4 Int, –4 Cha	As base creature	As base creature	As base creature	As base creature	As base creature but loses 2 ranks from each skill	As base creature	As base creature plus Alertness^{B}
Firenewt	+2 Dex, +2 Con, –2 Int, –2 Cha	Medium	30 ft.	2d8	+1/+0/+3/+3	(2+Int mod) × 5	Intimidate, Listen, Ride Spot	1 (Mounted Combat)
Khaasta	+8 Str, +2 Dex, +4 Con, +2 Int	Medium	30 ft.	3d8	+3/+1/+3/+3	(2+Int mod) × 6	Climb, Handle Animal, Intimidate, Knowledge (the planes), Ride, Spot, Survival	2 (Point Blank Shot, Power Attack)
Lizard king	+6 Str, +4 Dex, +4 Con, +2 Int, +2 Cha	Medium	30 ft., fly 30 ft. (average)	2d8	+2/+3/+3/+3	(8+Int mod) × 5	Balance, Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, Jump, Knowledge (the planes), Listen, Move Silently, Swim	1 (Power Attack)
Ophidian	+2 Str, +4 Dex	Medium	20 ft., climb 15 ft., swim 50 ft.	3d8	+3/+1/+3/+3	(2+Int mod) × 6	Climb, Hide, Listen, Move Silently, Spot, Swim	2 (Alertness, Dodge)
Sarrukh	+12 Str, +4 Dex, +10 Con, +20 Int, +8 Wis, +8 Cha	Medium	30 ft.	14d8	+14/+4/+9/+9	(2+Int mod) × 17	Appraise, Concentration, Decipher Script, Diplomacy, Disguise, Heal, Intimidate, Knowledge (arcana), Knowledge (history), Knowledge (religion), Listen, Move Silently, Spot	5 (Alertness, Combat Expertise, Improved, Initiative, Persuasive, Power Attack)
Tainted one	+2 Con	As base creature	As base creature	As base creature	As base creature	As base creature	As base creature	As base creature plus Alertness^{B}
Tren	+4 Str, +4 Con, –4 Int	Medium	30 ft.	4d8	+4/+1/+1/+4	(2+Int mod) × 7	Hide, Move Silently, Spot Swim	2+1 bonus (Dodge, Improved Initiative, Multiattack^{B})
Troglodyte	–2 Dex, +4 Con, –2 Int	Medium	30 ft.	2d8	+1/+3/+0/+0	(2+Int mod) × 5	Hide, Listen (+4 racial bonus on Hide)	1+1 bonus (Multiattack^{B}, Weapon Focus [javelin])
Pterafolk	+10 Str, +6 Con +4 Wis, –2 Cha	Large	30 ft., climb 20 ft., fly 30 ft. (average, wing-arms) or fly 50 ft. (good, pteranadon)	4d8	+4/+1/+4/+4	(2+Int mod) × 7	Climb, Jump. Listen, Spot	2+1 bonus (Alertness, Flyby Attack^{B}, Power Attack)
Yuan-ti, pureblood	+2 Dex, +2 Int, +2 Cha	Medium	30 ft.	4d8	+4/+1/+4/+4	(2+Int mod) × 7	Concentration, Disguise, Hide, Knowledge (any), Listen, Spot	2+2 bonus (Alertness^{B}, Blind-Fight^{B} Dodge,, Improved Initiative)

[1] Poison Kiss (Ex): While grappling, a tainted one can choose to smear her opponent with poisonous saliva instead of dealing damage. This poison "kiss" can be used only while grappling a foe with exposed skin. The tainted one makes an opposed grapple check instead of an attack and takes a –4 penalty on the check. If she wins, she successfully applies the poison (contact, Fortitude DC 13 + tainted one's Con modifier, initial and secondary damage 1d4 Con) by kissing, licking, or lightly biting her opponent. (This ability replaces the poison bite ability given in *Monster Compendium: Monsters of Faerûn.*)

RACIAL TRAITS TABLE 2

Race	Proficiencies	Natural Armor Bonus	Natural Attacks	Special Attacks	Special Qualities	Languages	Favored Class	Level Adjustment
Asabi	Simple weapons, scimitar, shields	+2	2 claws (1d4) and 1 bite (1d4)	—	Darkvision 60 ft.	Draconic Bonus: Common, Abyssal	Fighter	+1
Asabi, stingtail	Simple weapons, shields	+6	2 claws (1d6) and 1 bite (1d4) and 1 tail slap (1d4)	Poison tail (Fort DC 15, 2d6 hp/1d4 Con and Will DC 15 or *confusion* for next 2 actions)	Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to enchantment spells	Draconic Bonus: Common, Abyssal	Barbarian	+5
Broodguard	As base creature	As base creature	As base creature plus 2 claws (1d2) and 1 bite (1d3)	Rage (1/day, +4 Str, +4 Con, +2 Will save, –2 AC)	Immunities (charm, hold, poison)	As base creature	As base creature	+3
Firenewt	Simple weapons, shields	+0	2 claws (1d4)	Breath weapon (1/5 min., 5 ft., 1d6 fire, Reflex half)	Immunity to fire, vulnerability to cold	Draconic Bonus: Common, Salamander	Fighter, cleric	+3
Khaasta	Simple weapons, medium armor, shields, composite longbow, halberd, scimitar	+6	2 claws (1d4) and 1 bite (1d4)	—	Darkvision 60 ft.	Draconic Abyssal, Common	Fighter	+3
Lizard king	Simple weapons, shields	+5	2 claws (1d4) and 1 bite (1d6)	Smite good (1/day, +2 damage), spell-like abilities (3/day—*darkness*; caster level equals character level)	Damage reduction 5/magic, darkvision 60 ft., hold breath 4 × Con score rounds, resistance to acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10	Lizardfolk Bonus: Abyssal, Common	Barbarian	+5
Ophidian	Simple weapons, scimitar, shields	+3	1 bite (1d4)	Serpentine curse (bite, Fort DC 11, become ophidian over 2 weeks)	Darkvision 60 ft.	Infernal, Yuan-Ti Bonus: Abyssal, Common, Draconic, Sarrukhar	Fighter	+2
Sarrukh	Simple weapons, trident	+18	2 claws (1d8) and 1 bite (1d6)	Fear aura (10-foot radius, Will DC 21), poison (bite, Fort DC 22, 1d6/1d6), manipulate form (touch, Fort DC 22, physical alteration of choice), spell-like abilities[2]	Darkvision 60 ft., immunity to fire, spell resistance 20	Draconic, Sarrukhar Bonus: Common	Wizard	+8
Tainted one	As base creature	As base creature	As base creature	Poison kiss[1], psionics (3/day—*polymorph*, [snake forms only]; 1/day—*poison* ([DC 13 + Con mod] caster level equals character level)	Immunities (charm, hold, poison), SR 12 + 1/two levels	Abyssal, Common Draconic, Yuan-ti	As base creature	+3
Tren	Simple weapons	+8	2 claws (1d4) and 1 bite (1d4)	Stench (30 ft., Fort DC 14, sickened 10 rounds)	Darkvision 60 ft.	Draconic Bonus: Common, Salamander	Barbarian	+4
Troglodyte	Simple weapons	+6	2 claws (1d4) and 1 bite (1d4)	Stench (30 ft., Fort DC 13, sickened 10 rounds)	Darkvision 90 ft.	Draconic Bonus: Common, Giant, Goblin, Orc	Cleric	+2
Pterafolk	Simple weapons	+7	2 claws (1d6) and 1 bite (1d8)	—	Alternate forms (arms become wings or full pteranodon shape)	Pterafolk Bonus: Common, Sarrukhar, Yuan-Ti	Barbarian	+4
Yuan-ti, pureblood	Simple weapons, light armor, shields, longbow, scimitar	+1	—	Spell-like abilities (1/day—*animal trance* (DC 13), *cause fear* (DC 12), *charm person* (DC 12), *darkness*, *entangle* (DC 12); caster level 4th)	Alternate form (Tiny to Large viper), darkvision 60 ft., detect poison, SR 14	Common, Yuan-Ti Bonus: Abyssal, Draconic	Ranger	+2

[2] (3/day—*disrupt undead, identify, invisibility, knock, magic missile, misdirection* (DC 16), *see invisibility, sleep* (DC 15); 2/day—*confusion* (DC 18), *fireball* (DC 17), *lightning bolt* (DC 17), *polymorph;* 1/day—*teleport* (DC 19), *wall of force;* caster level 14th.



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Saurials

More Lizardkin for *Serpent Kingdoms*

The new *Serpent Kingdoms* book for use with the *Forgotten Realms Campaign Setting* provides a wealth of history and game information on several races of serpentfolk and lizardkin. Now designer Darrin Drader updates and expands the information about another lizard race known as the saurials. These creatures were previously described for D&D v.3.0 in an article by Sean K Reynolds in *Dragon Magazine* 292.

Overview

Somewhere near the Dalelands, in a hidden place known as the Lost Vale, lies a colony of intelligent reptilian humanoids said to hail from another world. These creatures, known as saurials, were stranded in Faerûn by the actions of an evil deity. More intelligent than lizardfolk and inclined to be peaceful and civilized, the saurials have maintained a thriving community in near-complete isolation for nearly fifteen years. Tales of these so-called dragonfolk pervade many cultures, but few humans have actually seen them.

Description

Several saurial subraces exist, although only four—namely bladebacks, finheads, flyers, and hornheads—are known to dwell in the world of Toril. Hornheads are as large as ogres and flyers are as small as halflings, but the other two subraces are similar to humans in height and weight.

All saurials are generally humanoid in shape. Each has two arms that end in clawed hands, two legs, and a lizardlike tail. A member of the flyer subrace also has two "wings"—actually flaps of skin that extend from its wrists to its waist that allow it to fly. The scales that cover a saurial's body are primarily green, with patterns of yellow on its back. Very rarely, a pure white saurial is hatched, but this coloration carries no stigma, and the event is not considered an omen.

Racial History

The saurials of Faerûn are community-minded creatures that were kidnapped from their home on an alternate Material Plane by the imprisoned deity Moander and transported to the Lost Vale. There they worked as slaves, corrupting and destroying the plants and

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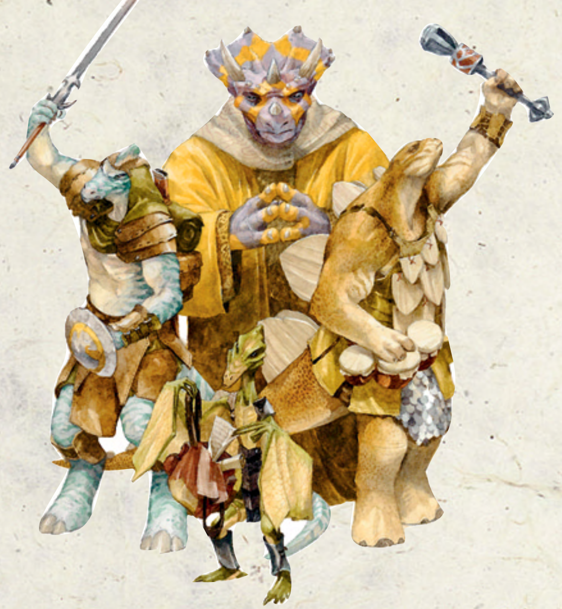


creatures of that region to facilitate Moander's return to full deity status. The saurials finally gained their freedom with the aid of a former Harper named Finder Wyvernspur (who slew Moander and absorbed his divine energy, thereby ascending to godhood himself), a saurial paladin known as Dragonbait, and a female adventurer named Alias. Elminster suggested that the saurials remain in the Lost Vale and work to repair the damage they had caused, and they have done so, using this time to recover physically and spiritually from the harsh treatment they endured as slaves.

outlook

Saurials are generally peaceful and contemplative creatures. Although they are trying to expand their numbers to ensure the race's survival, they have no desire to conquer new lands or to influence the world around them. Though they are not particularly xenophobic, they tend strongly toward isolationism. Many young saurials, however, are curious about the world beyond their village, and as those hatched in the Lost Vale reach adulthood, some may choose to explore the world around them. Some of these youngsters are likely to fall in with adventurers, since their strong community ties make traveling alone uncomfortable for them—especially if they haven't honed their language skills enough to communicate easily with other races.

Saurials get along well with other open-minded creatures, particularly those that respect nature. Since they have remained isolated from the other communities in the Dales, visiting saurials are likely to react with surprise at the many shapes and colors of other humanoids. A saurial's initial impression of a stranger is likely to color her perception of the individual's race as a whole.

Saurials are generally good-natured, and each seems to know from a very young age what role she will play in her own community. At the same time, however, all saurials support the right of an individual to seek out and learn whatever she wishes wherever she can. Some sages speculate that this attitude may be a form of rebellion against the slavery that the saurials once endured under Moander. Whatever their sources, these two factors ensure that as a race, saurials favor good over evil. Lawful saurials tend to be exceedingly protective, while chaotic ones tend to be more aggressive. All, however, favor open discussion of how good aims should be achieved and maintain that personal freedoms should share space with the will of the majority. Saurial leaders are usually wise individuals who employ good judgment to achieve these ideals.

saurial society

The saurials of Faerûn have banded together into a group known as the Lost Vale Tribe, which originally consisted of 110 adult saurials—primarily because Moander made a point of slaying the tribe's young. In the years since their release, the saurials have produced many new hatchlings, and the tribe now numbers 485 individuals, 104 of which are original members. The leader of the Lost Vale Tribe is Grypht (NG hornhead saurial wizard 15), who has three apprentices (NG saurial wizard 3). The spiritual leaders of the community are Sweetleaf (NG bladeback saurial cleric 9 of Chauntea), Copperbloom (CG finhead saurial cleric 5 of Finder Wyvernspur), and their eight acolytes (NG or CG saurial cleric 2 of Chauntea or Finder Wyvernspur).

In a typical saurial village, each member of the tribe learns a skill that suits him, such as blacksmithing, weaving, farming, hunting, carpentry, masonry, or the like. Saurials prefer to build single-family stone dwellings, although they have been known to live in thatched huts if material or time is in short supply.

A saurial village usually incorporates more than one subrace, and its members treat each other as equals and value one another's unique contributions to the community. The different subraces cannot crossbreed, so the members of a given saurial household are normally all the same subrace.

Finheads are the most common saurials. Bladebacks and hornheads require more food than the other subraces, so they deliberately keep their numbers low to avoid depleting the village's resources.

Language

Saurials speak Draconic, punctuating their speech with scents that indicate their emotions. Their voices are pitched too high for humanoids to hear, but those who can detect the scents and understand their meaning can gain a general understanding of a given saurial's mood. The emotions corresponding to the stronger scent cues are given on the following table.

Scent	Emotion
Baked bread	Anger
Brimstone	Confusion
Ham	Nervousness or worry
Honeysuckle	Tenderness
Lemons	Pleasure or joy
Roses	Sadness
Tar	Victory
Violets	Danger or fear
Wood smoke	Devotion or piety

Dragons and fey can hear saurials perfectly (although fey don't necessarily understand Draconic), and they generally understand the scent cues whether or not they can follow the vocal content of the message. Saurials can understand other creatures that speak Draconic, although their speech tends to seem dull and tired without the proper scent cues. Saurials can learn to speak languages (including Draconic) normally with study, although few bother to do so. Because of the difficulty of speaking the "deep tongues," saurials can understand the bonus languages they select but cannot actually speak them unless they devote skill points to learning them.

Saurials make written records by carving lines on sticks. Normally, however, written communication is used only for magical writing or to record important events.

Relationships

Saurials mate for life, and the bond between mates is far stronger than it is in most humanoid pairings. Siblings likewise share particularly strong bonds and do their best to protect one another from harm. Saurials make friends quickly and enemies slowly, though they do not hesitate to protect their loved ones from obvious harm.

Life Cycle

Assuming favorable conditions for nesting, a mated pair of saurials can produce one or two eggs per year. The parents share the duties of protecting the eggs and rearing and training the young.

Hatchlings grow to adult size within five years, but they require another ten to fifteen years to reach the mental and emotional maturity level of adults. Saurials have the same life expectancy and use the same age categories as dwarves.

Saurial Characters

Bladebacks, finheads, flyers, and hornheads are the only four saurial subraces known to live in Faerûn, although others might come through a *portal* now that a connection has been made to their home world. All four subraces are suitable for use as player characters.

Saurial Traits

All of the saurial subraces share the following traits. For other information specific to each subrace, see the monster statistics in the Appendix.

Cold Torpor (Ex): Saurials are warm-blooded creatures, but they retain heat poorly in cold environments. Thus, a saurial takes a –5 penalty on Fortitude saving throws made to avoid nonlethal damage from cold environments, and it takes double the normal amount of nonlethal damage for failing such a saving throw.

In cooler climates, saurials can easily die from exposure in an environment that a human would find merely uncomfortable. Thus, they usually bundle up to keep warm.

Protection from Sonic Attacks (Ex): Because a saurial's earholes are well protected, it gains a +4 circumstance bonus on saving throws against sonic effects and attacks.

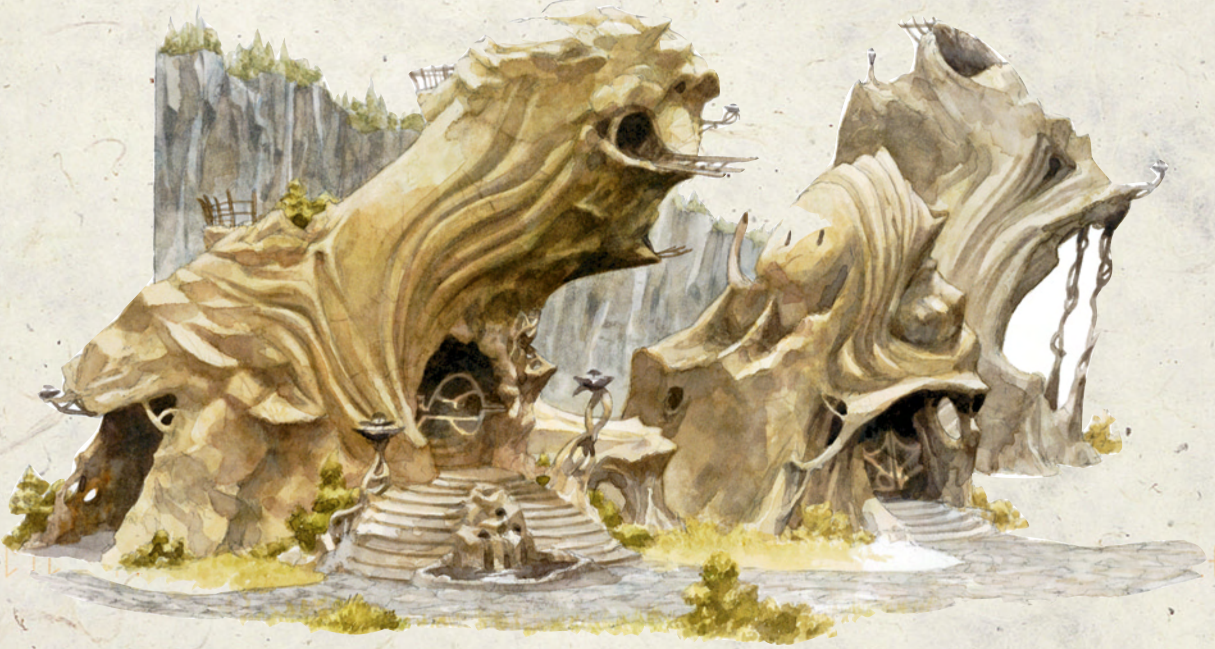
Scent (Ex): Saurials have the scent special quality, as described in the *Monster Manual*.

Vulnerability to Gas Attacks (Ex): A saurial's metabolism and reliance on scent make it vulnerable to attacks conveyed through gas, including *stinking cloud*, *cloudkill*, and poisonous gas. It thus takes a -4 penalty on saving throws against gas-based effects and attacks.

Magic of the Saurials

Saurials are quick to adapt to their surroundings, and since their arrival on Toril, they have become interested in magic of all kinds. Bladebacks and finheads have a natural aptitude for divine magic, and hornheads make excellent wizards.

The saurials make and use the same kinds of magic items that humanoids do, though they have a slight preference for defensive items. No unique spells have thus far emerged from the saurial culture.



Deities of the Saurials

Even on their homeworld, saurials were a spiritual people. The majority of those brought to Faerûn as slaves now worship Finder Wyvernspur because of his role in freeing them from Moander's rule. Others have converted to the worship of Faerûnian deities equivalent to those of their ancestors (predominantly Tyr and Tymora).

Relations with Other Races

Though they are generally friendly and good-natured, saurials have little interest in interacting with other races. Few visitors are permitted within their village in the Lost Vale, and the saurials leave only to protect their homes or to acquire needed goods that they cannot make themselves. This policy of isolation might change in the next year however, when the first generation of saurials hatched in Faerûn reaches maturity and becomes curious about the rest of the world.

Saurial elders have long cautioned the young ones against reckless wandering, knowing that the people of the outside world often fear the unfamiliar and are inclined to take offense at perfectly innocent actions. But the saurials are not a timid people, and such cautions cannot dim the spark of independence and the innate curiosity that has allowed them to survive and thrive despite their previous enslavement.

Saurial Equipment

Saurials favor the same kinds of weapons and armor as lizardfolk do, though their equipment tends to be of higher quality. Most saurials utilize their natural attacks in conjunction with their weaponry where possible.

Saurial Encounters

Few saurials go adventuring, so most encounters with them occur in or near the Lost Vale. However, exceptions do exist, and one of these is the saurial paladin known as Dragonbait.

Dragonbait

On his homeworld, the saurial paladin called Champion served the god of justice. While on an extraplanar quest, he was captured by the demon Phalse, but the actions of a luck goddess freed him and brought him to Faerûn. Shortly thereafter, he was captured by the minions of a sorceress named Cassana, who planned to sacrifice him and use his soul to power an artificial being that she was creating. But somehow this creature, known only as Alias, became alive on her own, before Cassana could sacrifice Champion. With the help of Finder Wyvernspur (who at the time was still a mortal), Champion and Alias escaped from Cassana's clutches and began traveling together.

Alias distrusted Champion at first and said that if he made one wrong move, he would be dragonbait. Since he didn't understand any language that Alias could speak, Champion accepted this term as his name in this world. The two were captured again, but together they finally eliminated their captors and won true freedom.

Some time thereafter, this strange couple began investigating rumors about the return of Moander, an evil god of rot and corruption who had been imprisoned for some time. With the aid of a Harper, Dragonbait and Alias discovered that Moander had brought some saurials to Faerûn, placed them in the Lost Vale, and enslaved them. At his bidding, they were performing tasks that would facilitate Moander's full return to the world. Delving deeper with the aid of magic, they realized that Finder Wyvernspur was the key to freeing the saurials and foiling Moander's evil plot.

When Dragonbait and Alias teleported to Finder's refuge, they found him and a halfling ally battling one of Moander's beholder minions and a cadre of orc troops. The two heroes immediately joined the battle and helped the embattled Finder emerge victorious. Afterward, the group went to the Lost Vale, where the enslaved saurials were working. Using cold magic to make the saurials sluggish, the heroes defeated them without serious harm on either side. Finder and an allied mage then traveled to another plane and permanently destroyed Moander. The slain deity's divine power settled on Finder, and he became a god in his own right.

Elminster encouraged the saurials to remain in the Lost Vale, and Dragonbait and Alias also stayed there for some time. But they could not refuse when adventure called, and they quested together throughout Faerûn for many years.

During one of their later adventures, Dragonbait and Alias traveled to Westgate to acquire a powerful magic item that would help the saurials watch their borders more easily. When they arrived, the leaders of Westgate solicited their aid in breaking the back of the Night Masks—a secret society that controlled crime in the city. After unraveling a complex web of payoffs, intrigue, and false identities, the two heroes defeated the leader of the Night Masks, a mysterious being known only as the Faceless. This action opened the way for one of Manshoon's clones to take over the organization a year later.

Eventually, Dragonbait and Alias returned to the Lost Vale and settled down. Dragonbait learned how to speak Common and took a mate named Copperbloom. He now spends most of his time protecting his people and raising his children, but he is always ready to defend his homeland against threats. Although he still serves his original deity (known to Faerûnians only as "the god of justice"), Dragonbait acknowledges the Faerûnian deities and receives his divine spells from Tyr.

Dragonbait might be encountered almost anywhere in the Dalelands. He is often accompanied by Alias or by saurial warriors and is usually on a quest for information, resources, or aid for the saurials of the Lost Vale.

Dragonbait (Champion): Male finhead saurial paladin 10 of Tyr; CR 11; Medium humanoid (reptilian); HD 2d8+6 plus 10d10+30; hp 100; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +11; Grp +16; Atk +16 melee (1d4+5, claw) or +19 melee (1d8+9 plus 1d6 fire/19–20 plus 1d10 fire, *+2 flaming burst longsword*); Full Atk +16 melee (1d4+5, 2 claws) and +11 melee (1d3+2, tail) or +19/+14/+9 melee (1d8+9 plus 1d6 fire/19–20 plus 1d10 fire, *+2 flaming burst longsword*) and +11 melee (1d3+2, tail); SA smite evil 3/day, turn undead 7/day; SQ aura of courage, aura of good, cold torpor, *detect evil,* divine grace, divine health, lay on hands, low-light vision, protection from sonic attacks, *remove disease* 2/week, scent, vulnerability to gas attacks; AL LG; SV Fort +17, Ref +14, Will +13; Str 20, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Balance +4, Craft (weaponsmithing) +11, Diplomacy +14, Heal +13, Jump +8, Knowledge (geography) +5, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +8, Ride +5, Speak Language (Common), Spot +8; Alertness, Cleave, Endurance, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Smite Evil (Su): Three times per day, Dragonbait may attempt to smite evil with one normal melee attack. He adds +4 to his attack roll and deals 10 points of additional damage. If he accidentally smites a creature that is not evil, the smite has no effect, but the attempt still uses up one daily use of the ability.

***Remove Disease* (Sp):** Dragonbait can use *remove disease,* as the spell, twice per week.

Aura of Courage (Su): Dragonbait is immune to fear, magical or otherwise. Each ally within 10 feet of him gains a +4 morale bonus on saving throws against fear effects.

Aura of Good (Ex): Dragonbait's aura of good is strong.

Cold Torpor (Ex): Dragonbait is a warm-blooded creature, but he retains heat poorly in cold environments. Thus, he takes a –5 penalty on Fortitude saving throws made to avoid nonlethal damage from cold environments, and he takes double the normal amount of nonlethal damage for failing such a saving throw.

***Detect Evil* (Sp):** Dragonbait can use *detect evil* at will as the spell (caster level 10th).

Divine Grace (Su): Dragonbait applies his Charisma bonus to all saving throws. (This modifier is already figured into the statistics given above.)

Divine Health (Ex): Dragonbait is immune to all diseases, including magical diseases such as mummy rot and lycanthropy.

Lay on Hands (Su): Dragonbait can heal wounds (his own or those of others) by touch. Each day, he can heal 40 points of damage. He may choose to divide his healing among multiple recipients, and he doesn't have to use it all at once. Alternatively, he can use any or all of this healing to deal damage to undead creatures. Using lay on hands in this way requires a successful melee touch attack and doesn't provoke an attack of opportunity.

Protection from Sonic Attacks (Ex): Because Dragonbait's earholes are well protected, it gains a +4 circumstance bonus on saving throws against sonic effects and attacks.

Vulnerability to Gas Attacks (Ex): Dragonbait's metabolism and reliance on scent make him vulnerable to attacks conveyed through gas, including *stinking cloud, cloudkill,* and poisonous gas. He thus takes a -4 penalty on saving throws against gas-based effects and attacks.

Paladin Spells Prepared (2/2): 1st—*bless, bless water;* 2nd—*delay poison, remove paralysis.*

Possessions: *+2 flaming burst longsword, cloak of resistance +3, belt of giant strength +4, bracers of armor +4, ring of protection +2, Keoghtom's ointment.*

Appendix: Saurials as Monsters

The following section gives the monster statistics for each kind of saurial, as well as information for creating saurial PCs.

Bladeback

Medium Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 2d8 (9 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)
Armor Class: 14 (+4 natural), touch 10, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+2
Attack: Claw +2 melee (1d4+1)
Full Attack: 2 claws +2 melee (1d4+1) and tail -3 melee (1d3)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Cold torpor, low-light vision, protection from sonic attacks, scent, vulnerability to gas attacks
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +2
Abilities: Str 13, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 12
Skills: Craft (any) +4, Diplomacy +4, Jump +4
Feats: Iron Will
Environment: Temperate and warm forest
Organization: Solitary, pair, pack (3–5), or tribe (6–30)
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral good
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +2

This bipedal lizard looks taller and stockier than a human; in fact, it's built much like a half-orc. A line of sharp scales runs down its spine from its head to the tip of its tail, which is about as long as its body.

Bladebacks are the most straightforward and trusting of the saurial subraces. Highly social, they mix well with all kinds of saurials, and even with creatures from outside the Lost Vale. Slow to anger, bladebacks work hard to understand the motives of others, but they are passionate once they have been pushed to the point of aggression. Bladebacks often become village leaders or advisors to those in power.

Like most saurials, bladeback adventurers are usually motivated by curiosity about the world around them. However, their trusting and open nature sometimes gets them into trouble that they can escape only through the use of force.

Bladebacks speak Draconic. They understand (but do not speak) Common, Elven, Sylvan, and Celestial.

COMBAT

Bladebacks seldom initiate battle because they would much rather learn about the creatures they meet. If attacked, however, they can employ their claws and tails with deadly efficiency.

Cold Torpor (Ex): Bladebacks are warm-blooded creatures, but they retain heat poorly in cold environments. Thus, a bladeback takes a –5 penalty on Fortitude saving throws made to avoid nonlethal damage from cold environments, and it takes double the normal amount of nonlethal damage for failing such a saving throw.

Protection from Sonic Attacks (Ex): Because a bladeback's earholes are well protected, it gains a +4 circumstance bonus on saving throws against sonic effects and attacks.

Scent (Ex): Bladebacks have the scent special quality, as described in the *Monster Manual.*

Vulnerability to Gas Attacks (Ex): A bladeback's metabolism and reliance on scent make it vulnerable to attacks conveyed through gas, including *stinking cloud, cloudkill,* and poisonous gas. It thus takes a -4 penalty on saving throws against gas-based effects and attacks.

Bladebacks as Characters

Bladebacks have the following racial traits.

- +2 Strength, +2 Charisma: Bladebacks are naturally strong and outgoing.
- Medium: As Medium creatures, bladebacks have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- Speed: Bladeback base speed is 30 feet.
- Base Hit Dice: A bladeback has 2d8 Hit Dice in addition to Hit Dice from its character levels. These racial Hit Dice give it a starting base attack bonus of +1 and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +0, Ref +3, and Will +0.
- Racial Skills: A bladeback gets 10 skill points for its racial Hit Dice. The class skills for these skill points are Craft, Diplomacy, and Jump.
- Feats: A bladeback may choose one feat for its racial HD. (Most choose Iron Will.)
- Natural Armor Bonus: A bladeback has a +4 natural armor bonus.
- Natural Attacks: A bladeback can make two claw attacks and one tail attack. Each claw attack deals 1d4 points of damage plus Strength modifier, and the tail attack deals 1d3 points of damage plus Strength penalty or one-half Strength bonus.
- Special Qualities: A bladeback has cold torpor, protection from sonic attacks, scent, and vulnerability to gas attacks, as described in the Combat section above.
- Automatic Languages: Draconic. Bonus Languages: Common, Elven, Sylvan, and Celestial. Bladebacks have difficulty with other languages. Although they can understand and read all the bonus languages they know, they cannot speak them without spending skill points.
- Favored Class: Cleric.
- Level Adjustment: +2.

Finhead

Medium Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 2d8 (9 hp)
Initiative: +1
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)
AC: 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural), touch 11, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+1
Attack: Claw +1 melee (1d4)
Full Attack: 2 claws +1 melee (1d4) and tail –4 melee (1d3)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Cold torpor, low-light vision, protection from sonic attacks, scent, vulnerability to gas attacks
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +4, Will +1
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 10
Skills: Balance +4, Craft (any) +4, Jump +3, Listen +3, Spot +3
Feats: Alertness
Environment: Temperate and warm forest
Organization: Solitary, pair, pack (3-5) or tribe (6-30)
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral good
Advancement: By character class
Level Adjustment: +2

This reptilian creature stands slightly shorter than a typical human and has roughly human shape and proportions. Its tail measures slightly more than half its body length, and a pronounced fin crowns its head.

Alert, bright, active, curious, and emotional, finheads are good with their hands and willing to perform almost any sort of hard labor. Most see the world in black-and-white terms and believe in absolute concepts such as good, evil, and truth.

Finheads are enthusiastic about new tasks and adventures, and they often leap into dangerous situations before fully understanding them. Even so, their ability to think quickly on their feet allows them to assess situations within moments.

Finheads speak Draconic. They understand (but do not speak) Common, Elven, Sylvan, and Celestial.

Combat

Finheads are apt to attack at the drop of a hat if they perceive their foes to be dangerous or particularly loathsome in some way. They seldom let obviously evil creatures pass without a fight. Like bladebacks, finheads prefer to fight with their claws and tails.

Cold Torpor (Ex): Finheads are warm-blooded creatures, but they retain heat poorly in cold environments. Thus, a finhead takes a –5 penalty on Fortitude saving throws made to avoid nonlethal damage from cold environments, and it takes double the normal amount of nonlethal damage for failing such a saving throw.

Protection from Sonic Attacks (Ex): Because a finhead's earholes are well protected, it gains a +4 circumstance bonus on saving throws against sonic effects and attacks.

Scent (Ex): Finheads have the scent special quality, as described in the *Monster Manual*.

Vulnerability to Gas Attacks (Ex): A finhead's metabolism and reliance on scent make it vulnerable to attacks conveyed through gas, including *stinking cloud, cloudkill,* and poisonous gas. It thus takes a -4 penalty on saving throws against gas-based effects and attacks.

Finheads as Characters

Finheads have the following racial traits.

- +2 Dexterity, +2 Wisdom: Finheads have good reflexes and exceptional insight.
- Medium: As Medium creatures, finheads have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- Speed: Finhead base speed is 30 feet.
- Base Hit Dice: A finhead has 2d8 Hit Dice in addition to Hit Dice from its character levels. These racial Hit Dice give it a starting base attack bonus of +1 and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +0, Ref +3, and Will +0.
- Racial Skills: A finhead gets 10 skill points for its racial Hit Dice. The class skills for these skill points are Balance, Craft (any), and Jump.
- Feats: A finhead may choose one feat for its racial HD. (Most choose Alertness.)
- Natural Armor Bonus: A finhead has a +4 natural armor bonus.
- Natural Attacks: A finhead can make two claw attacks and one tail attack. Each claw attack deals 1d4 points of damage plus Strength modifier, and the tail attack deals 1d3 points of damage plus Strength penalty or one-half Strength bonus.

- Special Qualities: A finhead has cold torpor, protection from sonic attacks, scent, and vulnerability to gas attacks, as described in the Combat section above.
- Automatic Languages: Draconic. Bonus Languages: Common, Elven, Sylvan, and Celestial. Finheads have difficulty with other languages. Although they can understand and read all the bonus languages they know, they cannot speak them without spending skill points.
- Favored Class: Paladin.
- Level Adjustment: +2.

Flyer

Small Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 2d8-2 (7 hp)
Initiative: +2
Speed: 20 ft. (4 squares), fly 50 ft. (average)
AC: 17 (+1 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural), touch 13, flat-footed 15
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/–3
Attack: Claw +2 melee (1d3)
Full Attack: 2 claws +2 melee (1d3) and tail -3 melee (1d2)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Qualities: Cold torpor, low-light vision, protection from sonic attacks, scent, vulnerability to gas attacks
Saves: Fort -1, Ref +5, Will +0
Abilities: Str 11, Dex 15, Con 8, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 8
Skills: Balance +5, Craft (any) +4, Gather Information +2, Hide +6, Jump –6
Feats: Flyby Attack
Environment: Temperate and warm forest
Organization: Solitary, pair, pack (3-5) or tribe (6-30)
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral good
Advancement Range: By character class
Level Adjustment: +3

This reptile is about the size of a halfling and has similar proportions. It has a short tail and a flap of scaly skin beneath each of its arms. These primitive wings stretch from its wrists to its waist.

Flyers are the noisiest and most nervous of the saurials, and members of other races often find them somewhat irritating. They love gossip and enjoy spending time with people who are interested in listening to them.

Because of its wings, a flyer has difficulty wearing normal clothing, armor, or even a backpack. Thus, their accoutrements are typically custom-made.

Flyers usually act as scouts and messengers in a saurial community, although several important saurial heroes have been flyers. Those that become adventurers often do so by accident or out of necessity, since their roles in saurial society often put them in harm's way.

Flyers speak Draconic. They understand (but do not speak) Common, Elven, Sylvan, and Celestial.

Combat

If threatened, flyers are more likely to flee than fight. When they do decide to enter combat, they usually stay in the air, making flyby attacks whenever possible to catch their foes by surprise. Otherwise, they attack by alternately diving and withdrawing.

Cold Torpor (Ex): Flyers are warm-blooded creatures, but they retain heat poorly in cold environments. Thus, a flyer takes a –5 penalty on Fortitude saving throws made to avoid nonlethal damage from cold environments, and it takes double the normal amount of nonlethal damage for failing such a saving throw.

Protection from Sonic Attacks (Ex): Because a flyer's earholes are well protected, it gains a +4 circumstance bonus on saving throws against sonic effects and attacks.

Scent (Ex): Flyers have the scent special quality, as described in the *Monster Manual.*

Vulnerability to Gas Attacks (Ex): A flyer's metabolism and reliance on scent make it vulnerable to attacks conveyed through gas, including *stinking cloud, cloudkill,* and poisonous gas. It thus takes a -4 penalty on saving throws against gas-based effects and attacks.

Flyers as Characters

Flyers have the following racial traits.

- +4 Dexterity, -2 Constitution, -2 Charisma: Flyers can soar through the air with exceptional grace, but they are physically weak and often irritating to others.
- Small: As a Small creature, a flyer gains a +1 size bonus to Armor Class, a +1 size bonus on attack rolls, and a +4 size bonus on Hide checks. However, it must use smaller weapons than humans use, and its lifting and carrying limits are three-quarters of those of Medium characters.
- Speed: Flyer base speed is 20 feet, and the creature can fly at a speed of 50 feet with average maneuverability.
- Base Hit Dice: A flyer has 2d8 Hit Dice in addition to Hit Dice from its character levels. These racial Hit Dice give it a starting base attack bonus of +1 and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +0, Ref +3, and Will +0.
- Racial Skills: A flyer gets 10 skill points for its racial Hit Dice. The class skills for these skill points are Balance, Craft (any), and Jump.
- Feats: A flyer may choose one feat for its racial HD. (Most choose Alertness.)
- Natural Armor Bonus: A flyer has a +4 natural armor bonus.
- Natural Attacks: A flyer can make two claw attacks and one tail attack. Each claw attack deals 1d3 points of damage plus Strength modifier, and the tail attack deals 1d2 points of damage plus Strength penalty or one-half Strength bonus.
- Special Qualities: A flyer has cold torpor, protection from sonic attacks, scent, and vulnerability to gas attacks, as described in the Combat section above.
- Automatic Languages: Draconic. Bonus Languages: Common, Elven, Sylvan, and Celestial. Flyers have difficulty with other languages. Although they can understand and read all the bonus languages they know, they cannot speak them without spending skill points.
- Favored Class: Rogue.
- Level Adjustment: +3.

Hornhead

Large Humanoid (Reptilian)
Hit Dice: 2d8 (9 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 30 ft. (6 squares)
AC: 14 (-1 size, +5 natural), touch 9, flat-footed 14
Base Attack/Grapple: +1/+6
Attack: Claw +1 melee (1d4+1)
Full Attack: 2 claws +1 melee (1d4+1) and tail –4 melee (1d4)
Space/Reach: 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with tail)
Special Qualities: Cold torpor, low-light vision, protection from sonic attacks, scent, vulnerability to gas attacks
Saves: Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +0
Abilities: Str 13, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 10
Skills: Craft (blacksmithing or weaponsmithing) +6, Hide –4, Jump +6, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +6
Feats: Power Attack
Environment: Temperate and warm forest
Organization: Solitary, pair, pack (3-5) or tribe (6-30)
Challenge Rating: 1
Treasure: Standard
Alignment: Usually neutral good
Advancement Range: By character class
Level Adjustment: +2

This bipedal lizard is as big as an ogre and has a tail longer than its own body. Sharp horns protrude from its head, and a bony plate protects its neck.

Hornheads tend to be careful, rational planners. They choose their words carefully and avoid taking action without prior contemplation. Most are interested in alchemy, engineering, and other mental pursuits, and many also enjoy physical tasks requiring discipline, such as blacksmithing and weaponsmithing.

Most adventuring hornheads are consumed by a desire to understand the particulars of the world around them. Some choose to study the laws of other cultures, some the philosophical underpinnings of a religion, and some the arcane secrets of new spells. A hornhead's favored class is wizard, although some choose to develop an innate talent for sorcery instead.

Hornheads speak Draconic. They understand (but do not speak) Common, Elven, Sylvan, and Celestial.

Combat

Hornheads seldom fight without first considering all their options—including nonviolent ones. If pressed into combat, they don't hesitate to use their size and strength to advantage.

Cold Torpor (Ex): Hornheads are warm-blooded creatures, but they retain heat poorly in cold environments. Thus, a hornhead takes a –5 penalty on Fortitude saving throws made to avoid nonlethal damage from cold environments, and it takes double the normal amount of nonlethal damage for failing such a saving throw.

Protection from Sonic Attacks (Ex): Because a hornhead's earholes are well protected, it gains a +4 circumstance bonus on saving throws against sonic effects and attacks.

Scent (Ex): Hornheads have the scent special quality, as described in the *Monster Manual.*

Vulnerability to Gas Attacks (Ex): A hornhead's metabolism and reliance on scent make it vulnerable to attacks conveyed through gas, including *stinking cloud, cloudkill,* and poisonous gas. It thus takes a -4 penalty on saving throws against gas-based effects and attacks.

Hornheads as Characters

Hornheads have the following racial traits.

- +2 Strength, +2 Intelligence: Hornheads are strong and have sharp minds.
- Large: As a Large creature, a hornhead has a -1 size modifier to Armor Class, a -1 size modifier on attack rolls, and a -4 size modifier on Hide checks. However, it can use larger weapons than humans can, and its lifting and carrying limits are double those of Medium characters.
- Speed: Hornhead base speed is 30 feet.
- Base Hit Dice: A hornhead has 2d8 Hit Dice in addition to Hit Dice from its character levels. These racial Hit Dice give it a starting base attack bonus of +1 and base saving throw bonuses of Fort +0, Ref +3, and Will +0.
- Racial Skills: A hornhead gets 15 skill points for its racial Hit Dice. The class skills for these skill points are Craft (blacksmithing or weaponsmithing), Jump, and Knowledge (architecture and engineering).
- Feats: A hornhead may choose one feat for its racial HD. (Most choose Power Attack.)
- Natural Armor Bonus: A hornhead has a +5 natural armor bonus.
- Natural Attacks: A hornhead can make two claw attacks and one tail attack. Each claw attack deals 1d4 points of damage plus Strength modifier, and the tail attack deals 1d3 points of damage plus Strength penalty or one-half Strength bonus. Hornheads have 10-foot reach with their tail attacks.
- Special Qualities: A hornhead has cold torpor, protection from sonic attacks, scent, and vulnerability to gas attacks, as described in the Combat section above.
- Automatic Languages: Draconic. Bonus Languages: Common, Elven, Sylvan, and Celestial. Hornheads have difficulty with other languages. Although they can understand and read all the bonus languages they know, they cannot speak them without spending skill points.
- Favored Class: Wizard.
- Level Adjustment: +2.

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